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Final Project Report

Internews Network

Independent Media in Central Asia

October 1, 2001 to November 30, 2004

This is the Final Report for the Internews Network project, Independent Media in Central Asia, funded by USAID.

The United States Agency for International Development awarded Internews Network, Inc. \$5,000,014 to support non-government media in Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, with a focus on broadcast media. The contract was from July 31, 2001 to July 31, 2004. In October of 2001, USAID awarded Internews Network an annex budget to create a production fund as well as to launch a print-media support project, which Internews Network subcontracted to International Center for Journalists (ICFJ), boosting the project's budget up to \$6,557,816. In September 2002, Additional funding was given to the project to provide for additional management costs and to extend Internews Network's project "Open Asia," raising the projects overall budget to \$7,411,831.

In April 2003, USAID awarded Internews Network supplementary funds to initiate new projects in each office, raising the project's budget to \$8,970,034.

Also, in December 2003, DRL awarded Internews Network's offices in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan a combined total of \$531,200 to support two innovative production projects in those countries. The projects were administered under the supervision of USAID/CAR

In July 2004, USAID awarded an additional \$200,000 to hold election-related programming in Kazakhstan in summer 2004.

By the end of the project, the project's total budget was \$9,701,232. USAID granted Internews Network a no-cost extension of two months to complete this project by a closing date of November 30, 2004. This report reflects activities and achievements for the whole period of the grant, providing a summary of the project's achievements.

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Introduction

Internews' projects in Central Asia address the dramatic shortfall of trained journalists, weak economic conditions for the development of self-sustainable media businesses, and the narrow public and political space allowed to independent media. During this grant period, new stations continued to appear in all four Central Asian countries covered by Internews' project, although others had to shut down due to the lack of revenue sources or political pressure from the authorities. Many stations were able to receive licenses and stay afloat with a great deal of assistance from Internews, guiding them through the complex licensing and registration regulations and advocating on their behalf in the courts and with the state officials.

The following projects were designed to give stations the economic, professional, and legal tools they need to survive in the face of growing governmental pressure. The key features of this program included the following:

Media Law Advocacy. In each office, Internews maintained a staff lawyer who drafted and analyzed proposed legislation, published commentary on legal issues related to the media, advised legislators, provided direct legal consultation to journalists, and served as nongovernmental representatives on state regulatory bodies. Internews' lawyers offered legal advice to private broadcasters on all aspects of media work, helping new stations navigate complex media regulations to receive licenses for broadcast, advising them in cases of governmental attacks or court proceedings, and working with journalists to help them learn their legal rights and responsibilities. To that end, Internews held many seminars and conferences to help both journalists and government representatives better understand the laws that govern their work. Internews also published handbooks and manuals containing media laws and commentary on their implementation. Internews offered regular commentary and advice through private consultations and legal clinics, at each office's website and bulletin, in numerous published newspaper articles, and through interviews in the media. It also worked with government agencies and officials to draft and implement media legislation, providing commentary on the draft laws and conveying the needs and perspectives of private media. In cases when the new legislation threatened to weaken the ability of the media to function, Internews provided the expertise to help journalists defend their interests before the government.

Association Support. Internews helped associations of broadcasters and journalists to build expertise necessary to defend the common interests and rights of their members. Internews did this by encouraging potential members to join forces, assisting with base logistics and registration, helping the new organization with resources and fundraising, and supporting its professional development and growth. In several cases, Internews paid salaries for executive directors, provided equipment and space, and covered communications costs of the nascent associations. Internews also helped associations in Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Tajikistan find alternate sources of funding to become financially independent of Internews and design their own initiatives in support of their members. Associations in these countries became Internews' trusted partners in many joint projects, conferences, and advocacy campaigns. In Uzbekistan, however, this type of partnership became increasingly difficult as

the association that Internews had helped to register was co-opted by government interests in the lead up to the December 2004 elections.

Training. Internews conducted regular seminars for TV and radio stations on topics ranging from journalism and production techniques to legal rights and management – all with a view of increasing local capacity. Having established a network of partner stations and print media organizations in each country, Internews conducted numerous residencies at their offices to address their immediate needs and stated concerns, organized internships to provide individual journalists and managers with more intensive knowledge-transfer opportunities, and sponsored their participation in a variety of international conferences to help them learn from experience of their colleagues abroad in other CIS countries, such as Ukraine and Russia, as well as in Europe and the United States. Internews also made sure journalists in all four countries benefited from new perspectives provided to them through the use of a few experienced Western trainers, but also by increasingly relying on the expertise of local and NIS-based trainers to address the need for sustainable local training capacity. Internews had further partnered with relevant nonprofit and international organizations to hold thematic training on coverage of such topics as HIV/AIDS, domestic violence, trafficking in women, and corruption.

Computer and Internet Technology. Internews sought to improve media outlets' access to and their use of modern information technology by providing them with computerized newsroom software *Internovosti*, ensuring their Internet connectivity, and engaging in Internet policy advocacy through the local implementation of the Global Internet Policy Initiative (GIPI). In the latter case, Internews used non-USAID funding to implement GIPI in each of the four countries, maintain staff lawyers, and ensure that citizens of Central Asia enjoy access to the Internet and telecommunications. Implemented in partnership with the Center for Democracy and Technology (CDT) and supported by many foundations and corporations, GIPI became a consultative coalition-based effort to identify, country-by-country, legal and regulatory impediments to Internet development and opportunities for reform. In Central Asia, GIPI served as a powerful vehicle allowing international and local ICT specialists to work with relevant government agencies, influence decision-making, and lobby for e-legislation that is free of government interference, making Internet technology readily available to media outlets and the public at large.

Print Media. Internews worked with the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ), which has 16 years of experience offering print-specific training in reporting and media management in developing countries, to conduct a country-by-country needs assessment of print media and, based on this information, provide training in areas such as newsroom management, journalism, and ad sales. Using a subgrant from Internews, ICFJ recruited a US print professional to serve for two years as a Regional Advisor for Print based in Almaty and implement a comprehensive training program focused on providing local journalists, editors, and managers with the skills needed to create an independent and economically viable press that serves the information needs of its readers. In designing seminars, workshops, and one-on-one consultations, the Regional Advisor and other Western trainers worked in close coordination with local print organizations as well as other international organizations involved in print training such as the Swiss CIMERA, the Eurasia Foundation, and OSI.

Production Fund. Internews designed its Production Fund to stimulate public interest programming on topics such as civil society, economic reform, the environment, and health, coupled with broader community outreach initiatives. The Fund sought to build skills of local media while increasing the quality and quantity of locally produced public interest programming; deepen collaboration between mass media and NGOs, international organizations, and other agencies of social welfare; strengthen social programming and documentary production as tools for social action; and enhance the viability of non-state media. To achieve these objectives, Internews provided production honoraria and small grants of equipment to independent broadcasters and print journalists interested in public interest programming. Equipment grants included editing suites to increase production capacity and transmitters to raise the stations' market reach. As a result, many participating journalists produced stories, created programs, and published articles that their audiences may not have had an opportunity to enjoy otherwise. Broadcast within Internews' co-productions or separately on individual stations, these materials served to raise the level of general awareness within the local population.

Production. Internews used production and co-production opportunities as practical training tools and venues for public interest journalism. Co-productions were produced on three levels: a national program for each participating country; a regional program that covered the entire Central Asian region; and a sub-regional program that covered the critical Ferghana Valley region. During this grant period, these productions had further evolved from simple news exchanges to increasingly sophisticated vehicles that provide vital news and information to the region. Over 60 stations participate in the production and broadcast of this programming, with local journalists producing the vast majority of stories concentrating on topics that have a concrete effect on the lives of their audience, be it a public health issue such as a lack of iodine in salt, or a regional issue such as Uzbekistan's use of land mines along its borders with Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic. These are only examples of some of the vital issues that state-controlled media will not touch.

Country Overviews

Kazakhstan

Internews' work in Kazakhstan during this time period focused on the following elements:

- Supporting the financial growth and sustainability of non-state media outlets;
- Conducting thematic trainings, seminars, residencies and professional exchanges to improve skill level at partner stations;
- Proposing changes to the media law and sitting on the state commissions responsible for drafting media-related legislation;
- Supporting a full-time lawyer to assist media professionals in frequency allocation disputes, election activities, libel suits and other court procedures;
- Producing a weekly national Kazakh- and Russian-language news exchange program;
- Continuing to support professional media and journalists' associations;

- Continuing distribution of high-quality licensed programs in Russian and Kazakh;
- Setting up a Production Fund designed to stimulate public interest programming;
- Launching a new Internews website and continuing to publish a regular media news bulletin.

Background

Internews' work in Kazakhstan has passed its 11th year, and, in spite of the government crackdown on non-governmental media and regulatory barriers to entry into broadcasting, we have continued to make progress in supporting private television stations and print outlets. Internews has worked with over 60 TV broadcasters and 33 radio stations in 24 cities in Kazakhstan beginning in 1992. Since that time, the quality and quantity of local news and other programming has increased dramatically, and the media market has grown to encourage competition despite heavy monopolization tendencies in favor of a few large holdings.

In the past three years, Internews' work and development of the Kazakhstani media were affected by two parallel tendencies: the sustained government pressure on the non-state media, particularly through the courts, and growth of the media market despite monopolization of the industry by the oligarchs and media groups close to the president. Two most prominent examples here are the media empire of Dariga Nazarbayeva (the president's daughter) and her ex-husband Rahat Aliev, and the media holding of Timur Kulibayev (the president's son-in-law and head of KazMunaiGaz). Because of high political stakes and financial interests involved in these businesses, they and other large holdings are forced into competition with each other, thereby driving the market and, paradoxically, benefiting small regional broadcasters.

Through this grant period, Internews worked with about 45 TV broadcasters and 25 radio stations all over Kazakhstan, and the number of these stations continues to grow. Large holdings have recognized that they cannot build effective media companies without a network of regional partners, and they often engage in business negotiations with local broadcasters, including Internews' partner stations and in the direst cases, have bought them out.

At the same time, regional media's independence from the government structures often incited a reaction of the state to pressure them further, indicating the state's fear that the media industry might slip from under its control. As a result, the state spent much of its energy trying to manage the media, including through legislative means. Much of these efforts showed not so much a commitment by the authorities to develop a free and independent media, but suggested an intention to control the sector through stricter regulations.

As the government sought to tighten legislative control through a series of restrictive media laws, Internews' experts drafted alternative versions of the legislation as well as detailed commentaries outlining shortcomings of official proposals and ways to improve them. In many instances, Internews was joined by other NGOs and international organizations in protesting undemocratic initiatives. At least in one case, a unanimous outcry of protest from the international community compelled President Nursultan Nazarbayev to veto the government's repressive draft Media Law.

In general, the authorities continued putting unnecessary pressure on independent media, particularly intensifying their attacks in 2002. Incidents of intimidation, violence and repression against media organizations included the following:

- Temporary suspension of the newspaper *Vremya Po* following a lawsuit filed by Rahat Aliev in October 2001. In December, Aliev also sued Internews Network-Kazakhstan for having published an article “Khabarization of the Country” on the monopolization of the media industry by the president’s family and his close associates.
- Burning of the offices of PR-Consulting LLP and *Respublika Business Review* (now renamed *Assandi Times*), as well as the Ak Zhayik printing house, in 2002. There were also attempts to intimidate *Respublika*’s editorial staff – a decapitated dog was left hanging outside the newspaper’s office window, and its chief editor received threats at home.
- Court orders to close Irbis TV in Pavlodar, radio station Rifma in Aktyubinsk, and newspaper *Respublika* in 2002.
- Killing of Bulat Manakov, a journalist from newspaper *Vremya*, in 2002, and beating of Maxim Yeroshin, editor of independent newspaper *Rabat*, in 2003 in Shymkent.
- Show trial of the opposition journalist Sergey Duvanov in 2003. His sentencing was decried by the US Department of State, OSCE, and many other international organizations.
- Defamation charges filed by Rahat Aliev against Internet publication *Navigator* in 2004.

Despite these attacks and court actions, Internews has in the past three years developed a national association of independent broadcasters that has a very real and effective voice on national policies affecting the work of the mass media in Kazakhstan and is included in national and government discussions during legislative drafting initiatives. Finally, Internews has continued to work with regional broadcasters, providing them with technical, professional and legal advice, engaging them in workshops, seminars and creative production opportunities, and helping them to form a network that is independent of the government.

Media Law Advocacy

Internews advocates for the passage of fair media broadcasting laws in Kazakhstan and has supported a full-time in-house lawyer in Almaty. Kazakhstan’s leading specialist on media law, he regularly provided advice to private media, both broadcast and print, about registration, licensing, libel, freedom of information and other issues related to the media’s ability to function freely.

Internews’ lawyer and Country Director were (by invitation) members of the parliamentary working group responsible for drafting and reviewing new media-related legislation. In this capacity they had contributed to the work on the Media Law, Law on Advertising, Law on Communications, Law on the Non-Governmental Organizations, and other normative acts. Advocacy also includes writing letters of support or protest on behalf of stations in trouble, monitoring and reporting on restrictions on freedom of the press and bias in application of the

law, giving presentations at various public forums, roundtables, public demonstrations on media legislation issues, publication of a monthly bulletin on media law, and support for local organizations that also advocate for media rights.

During this grant period, Internews' main legal work had to do with the new draft Media Law that was eventually vetoed by President Nazarbayev. Debate on the new law lasted many months in 2003 and 2004. If this bill had become law, the Ministry of Information would have won nearly unlimited powers to suspend a media organization's operations. It also spelled out certain functions that media organizations must perform under monitoring by the Ministry of Information – a requirement that critics feared could have been used to deny registration to media outlets that don't toe the government line.

Internews was the only NGO to receive a draft of a new law from the Ministry of Information with a request for review and commentary in December 2002. This came as an indication that the Ministry recognizes Internews' important role in the development of the Kazakhstani media.

The draft law, however, was a serious disappointment, and the Ministry proved not to be seriously interested in the changes proposed by the Internews experts. All through the period of discussion about the new draft law, Internews participated in the public hearings, round tables and sessions of the parliamentary working group. Its membership included Oleg Katsiev, Internews' Country Director, as well as Armanzhan Baytasov, president of the National Association of Independent TV and Radio Broadcasters (NAT-KZ), and Tamara Kaleyeva, president of the Adil Soz Foundation. One lawyer from each organization also attended the working group's sessions and suggested ways to improve the law.

Unfortunately, Internews was forced to pull out of the drafting process after its alternative version of the legislation, officially introduced by the Ak Zhol party, was left without proper attention from the authorities. In the end, President Nazarbayev was compelled to recognize the controversial nature of the new law that incited strong opposition both at home and abroad. In April 2004, he vetoed the bill after its draft had passed both chambers of the Parliament.

Other major legal work during this grant period included the following:

Internews' representatives were able to convince the Congress of Journalists against adopting a binding code of media ethics that was drafted by President Nazarbayev's administration in 2003. Internews argued that such a code had to be developed by the media organizations themselves, rather than be forced on them from the top. As a result, the Congress adopted only a non-binding "Declaration of Moral Basis of Journalism in Kazakhstan."

In August 2002, a lawsuit of the Regional Department of Communication against the TV station TV-29 in Temirtau ended in favor of the journalists. With legal support and consultations from Internews, the station was able to prove that it worked in compliance with the existing legislation. This case was one in a series of suits filed by the authorities against several independent TV companies starting in February 2002. Overall, the government sought to suspend 10 regional stations that were accused of violating the Media Law and the Law on

Languages. Internews advised all of these stations, helping a number of them to successfully defend their right to continue broadcasting. Altogether, Internews' lawyer conducted hundreds of legal consultations for media organizations and individual journalists throughout this grant period.

In November 2002, the State Commission on Frequency Distribution allocated new broadcast frequencies (for the first time in two years), while the Ministry of Information announced a competition for TV frequencies in 5 more cities: Astana, Pavlodar, Aktau, Atyrau and Petropavlovsk. Prior to that, Internews had consistently criticized the government's non-allocation of broadcast frequencies, while Oleg Katsiev, Internews' Country Director, had personally delivered this same message to Vice-Minister A. Doszhan during two private meetings in the summer and fall of 2002. Earlier in the year, Internews was invited by the government to represent the interests of non-state media on the State Commission on Frequency Distribution.

It is also worth noting that during this grant period, Internews' experts conducted a series of voluntary "due diligence" audits at individual stations. The purpose of this project, funded by OSI Budapest, was to help media organizations to comply with media regulations, given the fact that the government increasingly uses complicated laws as a rationale to put political pressure on the mass media. Internews recognizes that strict compliance with the law helps mass media resist this pressure.

Finally, Internews Network-Kazakhstan was itself sued in December 2002 by Rahat Aliev for having published an article "Khabarization of the Country" on the monopolization of the media industry by the president's family and his close associates. Aliev was seeking financial compensation and publication of the refutation. Paradoxically, this lawsuit gave Internews additional reasons to speak up against violations of media rights, hold press conferences, and raise public discussions about the issues of media ownership and consolidation of the media, which, previously a taboo, has been raised on a regular basis, most recently by the party Ak Zhol, which is now being sued by Dariga Nazarbayeva for libel on their allegations of her monopolization of the media. Internews' trial was widely covered by the local media, including Internews' partner stations in the regions, as well as Rakhat, Channel 31, Shahar, Yuzhnaya Stolitsa, Russian information agency Interfax, and many newspapers.

Association Support

As the government steps up the pressure on independent stations, the need for an effective association becomes more urgent. Internews responded by continuing to support the development of a local media association.

NAT KZ

Internews has continued working in close partnership with NAT KZ, which currently has 43 regular and eight associate members. NAT was born in Internews' office in 2000 in order to bring together independent TV and radio stations to protect and advance their common interests. Initially, the association focused on media law advocacy, and it still pursued this

original mission through this grant period. NAT actively advocated on behalf of newspapers and stations facing lawsuits from the authorities, and its president Armanzhan Baytasov was a member of the parliamentary group that worked on the draft Media Law.

In April 2003, Internews Kazakhstan received supplementary funds from USAID to further support the development of NAT. The grant covered office rent, equipment, and other administrative costs for a year and a half. In June, NAT moved to a new office fully equipped with computers, Internet connection, and other necessary features.

NAT has also gradually expanded its mission to cover trainings, seminars and conferences. In June 2003, it served as one of co-organizers of Internews' first international conference of news services of regional stations from Russia, CIS countries and the Baltic States called *Mir Novostei* ("The World of News"). While at the conference, held in Moscow, NAT KZ representatives participated in a joint meeting with NAT Russia and NAT Ukraine to share experience and plan for possible exchange and study tour opportunities.

In June 2004, NAT took on a more ambitious project, organizing the First International Central Asian NAT Conference entitled "Modern Developments in the Media Industry." The conference, designed after the annual NAB Convention and attended by more than 100 broadcasters, media professionals, and NGO representatives from Central Asia, other NIS countries, Germany and Britain, consisted of informational sessions that allowed the participants to discuss the most pressing issues in the media industry.

NAT also played a leading role in the run-up to the September 2004 parliamentary elections. Its representatives drafted materials and developed project ideas under the framework of the Media and Elections initiative and worked with the Central Elections Commission and the Ministry of Information to create and publish an instructions manual for journalists under the title *The Media and Elections: Questions and Answers* in Kazakh and Russian languages. NAT also organized five study seminars for the total of 120 journalists in Almaty, Ust-Kamenogorsk, Shymkent, Kokshetau, and Atyrau.

Adil Soz

Internews continued to support and collaborate with Adil Soz International Foundation for Protection of Freedom of Speech. Adil Soz conducts monitoring of violations of journalist and media rights and freedom of expression rights. It publishes its findings and distributes a newsletter *Legislation and Practice*.

During the surge of violence against opposition journalists in 2002, Adil Soz joined Internews at the press conferences and other public events to protest violations of media rights and closing of several independent stations. In November 2002, Adil Soz and Internews organized a joint two-day conference entitled "The relationship between the courts and mass media." The conference was attended by journalists, mass media lawyers, Supreme Court judges, representatives of the regional courts, and many others.

Adil Soz's monitoring project revealed that public officials not only fail to recognize their responsibility in safeguarding journalists' rights, but they actively prevent them from performing their professional duties. According to Adil Soz' figures, there were 130 cases of limitation of access or denial of information in 2001. In 2002, such cases amounted to 263. In 2003, the number grew to 415. And it is likely to rise even further as of the end of 2004 – these figures will become available in early 2005.

Supported by Internews, Adil Soz also organized a number of public events, including a joint seminar with OSCE called "Strengthening of principles of openness and lawfulness through strengthening of partnership and mutual responsibility of the judicial system and media." The seminar addressed ways to abolish criminal prosecution of journalists for defamation.

In May 2003, Adil Soz established a Public Center for Independent Expert Examination on Mass Media Issues. The center provides assistance to media outlets and journalists in legal disputes involving drawings, language, photos and video material that require special examination by experts in order to be considered as court evidence. Adil Soz' initiative to establish the Center was supported by the Supreme Court of Kazakhstan.

Training

This grant committed Internews to implement an extensive skills development program addressing local media's needs for practical skills and relevant professional information. Internews conducted or co-sponsored a total of 41 seminars and trainings on journalism and production skills, covering topics such as basic news production, news videography and tape editing, news anchor training, newsroom organization, computer graphics and design, advertising production, and news editor training. Media management seminars covered TV and radio management, ad sales, station marketing and promotion.

For trainings and seminars, Internews relied on skilled local training staff and trainers from other NIS countries, saving on travel costs and salaries of Western trainers. Internews employed foreign trainers mostly for advanced or specialized subjects, with basic journalism and production seminars taught by local or Russian trainers whose experience and skills are often more relevant than those of Westerners. Russian trainers came from Internews Russia, BBC's Fund for Independent Radio Broadcasting (Moscow), TV2 station (Tomsk), advertisement agency Anatoliev and Partners (Krasnoyarsk) and many other organizations. The costs of some Western trainers were covered by other sources such as USIS and the French Embassy.

Internews also continued multi-disciplinary on-site residencies and consultations for radio and TV broadcasters. Training teams of a management expert, a journalism expert, and appropriate production specialists spent a week at each station during each of the residencies in order to make credible evaluations and institute policy changes without disrupting the station's day-to-day activities. Internews also provided short-term on-site consulting, sending staff members to stations for two to three days to work on specific aspects of station development. Overall, we held 60 residencies and consultations over the life of the program. In one effective project, we organized six on-site consultations lasting five days each and two residencies lasting seven

days each at the stations preparing to host election-related talk shows and debates in 2004. These stations were: Era TV (Astana), TVK 6 (Semipalatinsk), Alau TV (Kostanai), Art TV (Karaganda), Channel 5 (Karaganda), and Otyrar TV (Shymkent). Such talk shows on election-related issues had never been previously done at most of the stations, largely due to the expensive nature of such productions. They enjoyed tremendous popularity with local viewers, and many stations are now seeking funds to make such programming a more vital part of their schedule.

In addition, Internews staff provided ongoing advice and technical support in areas including equipment repair, new technologies, station development, newsroom organization, management, and ad sales. For instance, we helped Era TV (Astana) to set up for production and broadcast, purchase equipment and install communication systems in 2003. And in 2004, Internews' consultants worked with Era TV's staff on perfecting their news desk operations and news production and held a series of master classes at the station. Internews was also instrumental in the creation of TV Studio Accent (Lisakovsk). Its staff had participated in many of Internews' seminars and production projects until they decided to establish their own private station and received a broadcasting license in 2003. In their letter of gratitude, the Accent staff acknowledged Internews' "tremendous help in the station's development and training of its journalists." "Thanks to various Internews staff members," they wrote in the letter, "we feel we are a well-established television station now, and we are not alone in the complex world of the television business."

Our support for partner stations also included engaging them in a number of high-profile regional events such as the *Mir Novostei* ("World of News") conference for CIS and Baltic states. The first such conference was held in 2003 in Moscow, and Kazakhstan was represented by Channel 31 (Almaty), TVK-6 (Semipalatinsk), Otyrar (Shymkent), Channel 5 (Karaganda), and TV ART (Karaganda). Internews covered a small part of their costs, but these stations had to find matching funds to take advantage of this important opportunity to establish contacts with their colleagues abroad. Channel 31 received an honorary award for one of its stories, marking the first time that one of Internews Kazakhstan's partner stations won an international award.

Finally, in the run-up to the September 2004 parliamentary elections, Internews held a series of residencies at local media stations scheduled to air pre-electoral talk shows or debates. These included Otyrar (Shymkent), Alau TV (Kostanai), Era TV (Astana), TVK 6 (Semipalatinsk), Channel 5 (Karaganda), and ART (Karaganda). The project was aimed at attracting public attention to the elections and improving the work of journalists covering the election process. Recognizing the importance of the media coverage during elections and the fact that debates are still a novelty in Kazakhstan, Internews provided technical support to create forums in which state officials could practice debating skills and openly express their opinions. As part of the Elections 2004 project, Internews also ran a contest of election PSAs. State-owned and independent stations presented 27 radio and 18 TV PSAs, and the package of the best works was sent to over 16 TV and 17 radio stations across the country.

Computer and Internet Technology

Internews continued making the *Internovosti and News Factory* software available to Kazakhstani stations. This Internews-commissioned software – a project of Internews Russia – computerizes and structures newsroom operations, increasing effectiveness in editorial planning, research, and archiving. In 2003, Internews held a seminar for representatives of 12 TV stations from eight cities on the use of the News Factory software. They were then given the updated software at the end of the seminar. Currently, 12 stations in Kazakhstan have invested their resources to purchase software and update their computer facilities, and five of them have been actively using it in their work. Internews has received funds from the US State Department's Department for Rights and Labor in order to create the infrastructure for a Kazakhstan-based *News Factory* news agency, uniting independent stations and providing for the sharing of vital and independently produced news reports from around the country to stations around the country. This project will be launched in 2005.

Internews used non-USAID funding to implement and maintain its Global Internet Policy Initiative (GIPI). GIPI lawyers worked closely with media lawyers to draft, comment and provide consultations to the authorities on the variety of new legislation such as the Law on Communications, the Law on Electronic Signature and Electronic Documents, and the Law on Informatization. GIPI's assistance in developing these laws and by-laws was specifically requested by the appropriate state agencies. GIPI representative was invited to join the National Council on Information as well as the Committee on Communications and Informatization. Because of this status that afforded GIPI access to key government officials and a forum for advocating policy reform, GIPI lawyers were able to convince the authorities against a number of restrictive or unnecessary measures, such as limiting foreign shares of telecommunication companies. GIPI has also produced several publications on the freedom of access to the Internet, including a 60-page report on the administrative barriers to telecommunications market development.

Most recently, the GIPI coordinator prepared research for the State Program on Forming E-Government in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2005-2007 – a document that was approved by President Nazarbayev in November 2004. At the present time, the government is drafting the Action Plan on Implementation of this State Program, and a group of NGOs consisting of GIPI, the Association of IT Companies, and Soros Foundation-Kazakhstan organized a roundtable called "Ways of Overcoming the Inequality in Access to Digital Technologies in Kazakhstani Society in the Context of Forming E-Government." At the roundtable, the GIPI coordinator presented documents that included glossaries on e-government and unequal access to digital technologies, the essential provisions of the proposed e-government concept for Kazakhstan, and a commentary explaining the possible risks of the implementation of the concept. The roundtable received extensive coverage in the local press.

Print Media

Internews partnered with the International Center for Journalists to train print journalists. ICFJ's print advisor George Krinsky has been based in Almaty since early 2002, working with Internews to design and run trainings for print journalists and management. These included five seminars and eight workshops on issues ranging from newspaper design and layout to media management and sales.

Internews' partnership with ICFJ involved a "road show" training in three Central Asian republics, including four regional cities in Kazakhstan. This series of brief, intensive workshops focused on imparting the fundamentals of information-based journalism to the new generation of print media professionals. A total of 55 early-career journalists participated in the Kazakhstani leg of the project.

Together with ICFJ, Internews also produced a number of professional training manuals and handbooks for print journalists, including "The Fundamentals of Reporting, Writing and Editing for Independent Newspapers" by George Krinsky and "A Path Toward Independence: Principles of Newspaper Management for Central Asia" by John C. Ronald. Another manual, on the coverage of business and economic news, was written by Anya Schiffrin, director of journalism programs for the Initiative for Policy Dialogue (IPD). In 2003, IPD partnered with the Kazakhstan Press Club to conduct a workshop titled "Covering Resource Wealth: A Workshop for Reporters." ICFJ had contributed \$3,000 to this workshop in support of business and economic journalism in Kazakhstan.

Internews and ICFJ also lent their assistance to another program in media management training for Kazakhstan. In 2003, ICFJ consultant Judith Roales spent a month in Kazakhstan providing on-site consultations at the offices of newspapers in Almaty, Uralsk, Kostanai, Semey and Ust-Kamenogorsk.

Production Fund

In late 2002, Internews launched the Small Grants Program Production Fund to provide financial and technical assistance to journalists and producers from non-state media outlets in creating programming on issues of public significance such as civil society, gender, economic reform, youth issues, environment and health. The Fund is administered on a competitive basis, and Internews provides winning projects with small weekly production honoraria to stimulate coverage of targeted issues, as well as equipment such as cameras and non-linear editing systems.

Based on the competition criteria, Internews selected 11 companies/projects to receive the Production Fund assistance. Among them were such diverse initiatives as a gender monitoring project and publication of the weekly bulletin *Equal and Different* by the Women's Association "Status," creation and support for the Internet portal REAL.KZ by the Foundation for Support of Independent Media, and a TV program on voters' rights "You Have the Right" produced by Larissa Makarochkina and Erlan Iginov and distributed among TV stations in Russian and Kazakh languages.

Production

Internews continues weekly production of *Open Asia* in Russian in Almaty. The program is then translated into local languages in the respective Central Asian offices, with about 60 stations broadcasting and contributing to the program and a potential audience of

approximately 20 million viewers. In Kazakhstan, a print version of the *Open Asia* stories appears weekly in the newspaper *Izvestia-Kazakhstan*.

The exchange project *Provintsia* (Province) allows Internews' offices in Central Asia to send stories from *Open Asia* to be broadcast by TV stations in Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, and other NIS countries. In return, stations in Central Asia receive stories from Russia.

It is also worth mentioning that in 2003, *Open Asia* won a prize in the OSCE's competition for the best journalistic work on the issue of the death penalty's abolition in Kazakhstan. Other winners included journalists who had participated in Internews' trainings, including Sergei Ponomarev from Khabar and Alexander Gabchenko from Channel 31 (Almaty).

Internews Kazakhstan also produces *Aina* ("Mirror"), the only independently produced Kazakh-language national TV news program in the country. Also available in Russian, *Aina* is aired by at least 17 stations, 15 of which contribute stories to the program. With some of the highest quality production in Kazakhstan, *Aina* showcases the work of local journalists.

Kyrgyz Republic

Internews' work in the Kyrgyz Republic during this time period focused on the following elements:

- providing ongoing legal assistance to independent broadcasters and advocating for improved media laws;
- launching a Production Fund to support innovative issue-oriented TV, radio and print projects by independent media across the country;
- producing two new TV programs and one new radio show;
- engaging in a number of special production campaigns and continuing with the popular countrywide exchange program *Door*;
- providing direct institutional support to two Kyrgyzstani media support organizations;
- holding training seminars and residencies on issues related to station sustainability, news production, journalism quality, elections coverage, public policy, and social issues.

Background

The number of registered independent media outlets in the Kyrgyz Republic has been regularly increasing through this grant period to reach about 300, among which about 100 are active and regularly distributing information to the population in all main cities of the country. Many media outlets that had appeared in the 1990s have reached maturity, which means an audience and a certain level of professionalism and stability. They have developed ways to make money, maintain a permanent staff and produce local programs, including news. Internews has, in turn, worked with about 20 TV and about 10 radio stations, including in the South through our office in Osh. We provided them with trainings, seminars, residencies, conferences, consultations, and equipment, supported their and other stations' special projects through Internews'

Production Fund, and relied on their contributions to produce programs *Door* and *Asman*, as well as the Central Asian exchange project *Open Asia*.

Meanwhile, in recent years politics penetrated the Kyrgyz media. Newspapers became strongly divided between those which are state and pro-governmental and those supportive of the opposition. This led to direct conflicts between them and attacks from officials against “opposition” newspapers, mostly through an increased number of court cases for slander. A telling example here is the case of the government’s targeted and consistent attack against the newspaper *Moya Stolitsa* which was forced to fold in 2003 under the weight of numerous judicial fines resulting from official lawsuits. Even when it began publishing under a different name and switched over to an independent printing press to avoid pressure and censorship from the state, the complaints and court cases did not stop.

What also affected Internews’ work in the Kyrgyz Republic is the fact that the biggest print and TV private outlets such as *Vecherny Bishkek* newspaper, KOORT TV station, and NBT TV station were bought in 2002 and passed under the control of members of the presidential family. Their coverage consequently lost objectivity and neutrality. News shows often start with news on the president and cover the activities of his wife’s “Meerim” foundation. No critical materials are broadcast. Moreover, it became increasingly difficult to make a distinction between non-governmental and governmental media. Many media organizations, although formally independent, experienced increased pressure from the authorities and some of them started to practice self-censorship. In one case, the station *Pyramida* refused to air Internews’ program *Door* ahead of the February 2003 national referendum on the new version of the Constitution. Unofficially, the information director of the station explained that the station was under threat from the authorities and could lose its license. In all, when it became clear that some independent TV stations in Bishkek became pro-government, Internews reoriented its support towards program content and towards stations in the regions.

In this atmosphere, the courts became an effective means for the authorities to attack critical press and broadcast media, and Internews’ lawyers were increasingly involved throughout this grant period in numerous trials against the media and individual journalists. Internews’ legal and political support helped many of them avoid closures, jail terms, and high fines. Internews’ lawyers also contributed to the efforts to prevent the government from taking measures that would have limited the freedom of the press, particularly regarding the registration of media outlets and the procedure of attribution of frequencies. At the same time, there is still much to be done as the media, public, and NGO community continue discussing efforts to decriminalize libel in the Kyrgyz Republic. It is worth mentioning that in 2003, government officials brought to court over a dozen libel suits, almost three times more than in 2000. Still, the Kyrgyzstani parliament had in 2004 again, for the third time since 1997, rejected presidential revisions of the Criminal Code that proposed to eliminate criminal liability for slander and libel.

These and other problems with the authorities, language requirements, licensing regime, and economical difficulties have pushed Kyrgyz independent media outlets to unite their forces and work together. Several media associations have appeared since 2001, focusing on the defense of common rights and improvement of self-sustainability. Internews worked in close

partnership with most of these organizations, held joint conferences and media events, and, together with other partners, engaged in talks with the government on improving the legal environment for the media.

Media Law Advocacy

Early in this grant period, Internews, other media support NGOs, and media outlets in Kyrgyzstan faced a threat from the government's Decree 20 that required re-registration of all media organizations and political parties and stopped registration of new media outlets. It took considerable advocacy work, international diplomatic pressure, and local public activism to compel President Askar Akayev to remove the decree in May 2002. During that time, Internews held meetings with parliament members and top government officials, including the head of the presidential administration, to argue against the decree. In the end, this attempt on the part of the government to control the media caused significant worry to all independent players in Kyrgyzstan and, in a way, set the atmosphere for Internews' work.

The next major challenge for the Kyrgyz media community had to do with an onslaught of libel cases, countered by NGOs' efforts to decriminalize libel. The parliament had rejected the president's proposed legislation decriminalizing libel on three occasions in the past seven years, most recently in 2004, despite heavy criticism from the international community. Internews' lawyers took part in the 2003 parliamentary hearing on the mass media, delivering a report on the necessity to amend the Criminal Code. Internews' lawyers provided commentaries to mass media on these laws.

Internews also participated in an expert group assisting the official working group that drafted legislative proposals, changes and additions to the Law on Freedom of Access to Information. The intended changes to the law were to provide citizens with equal rights and free access to official information and increase the responsibility of state and municipal employees in cases when they illegally refuse to provide such information. Some members of the group suggested prolonging the development of the draft law until March 2005. In late 2004, Internews also published and distributed 350 pages of the commentary to the Election Code of the Kyrgyz Republic that included analysis of amendments prohibiting pre-election propaganda in foreign media outlets operating on the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic.

All through this grant period, Internews' lawyers provided numerous consultations to Kyrgyz media outlets and individual journalists, making numerous court appearances on their behalf. These included:

- A slander case against newspaper *Reklama, Informatsia, Obiavlennia* – dismissed following an intervention of the lawyer from Internews' Media Commissioner Institute;
- A lawsuit for moral damages against the Djalalabat regional newspaper *Akykat*;
- A slander case against *Bishkek Times*' journalist and owner Janybek Janyzakov;
- A slander case brought by a parliament member against journalist Kalila Jamgyrchieva from newspaper *Uchkun* – dismissed by the court;
- A case of imprisonment and blackmail charges against Bakhpurbek Alenov, chief editor of the independent newspaper *Enesai*;

- A Supreme Court appeal in the case against newspaper *Portret Nedeli* – the original libel charges were brought by the head of the Kyrgyz local government. Because of the prohibitive fines in this case, the paper was forced to close its operations;
- An appeal in the case against Mikhail Korsunsky, a *Moya Stolitsa* journalist, who was sued by the Prime Minister Nikolai Tanaev for the violation of his honor and dignity;
- Cases against independent newspapers *Kyrgyz Ordo*, *Vecherny Bishkek* and *Aalam*, all facing suits for the protection of honor, merit, and business reputation;
- A Supreme Court appeal in the bribery case and eventual imprisonment of the journalist Samagan Orozaliev.

Internews had also sought outside funding to supplement and strengthen its legal defense programs. Several of these efforts deserve special mentioning. In the spring 2004, Internews started an NED-sponsored legal defense and education project for the mass media in the south of Kyrgyzstan. NED funding allowed Internews to hire a lawyer to provide free legal advice to media outlets on the material being prepared for broadcast or publication so as to avoid libel or slander charges, conduct due diligence audits, and publish informational flyers and brochures about media rights and obligations. At about the same time, Internews also received funding from the European Commission to create the Media Commissioner Institute (MCI). The project, which is the first of its kind in Kyrgyzstan, provides legal assistance to media outlets and journalists, considers complaints regarding journalistic practices, and lobbies the government to adopt media legislation that meets international standards.

Finally, additional funding from NED allowed Internews to implement a legal literacy project. Starting in 2001, NED funded a number of Internews' publications, including two practical guides for media professionals with legal information and case studies, as well as the manual *Mass Media and Kyrgyz Law*, published in Russian and Kyrgyz. These and other publications produced by Internews' legal experts were distributed to Kyrgyz universities, local media outlets, and NGOs, and contributed to improving legal literacy among media professionals. Internews had further actively worked with the journalism faculties of Kyrgyz universities to introduce instruction on the new subject, "Media Law in the Kyrgyz Republic," for their students. This joint project with NED also included a Legal Support Center for Journalists in the southern region of Kyrgyzstan, which hosts a full-time lawyer to monitor the situation of journalists and provide on-going free legal advice to journalists, publishers, and others working in mass media. The Center covers three administrative regions of southern Kyrgyzstan: Osh, Jalal-Abad and Batken.

Association Support

Internews provided direct institutional support to two Kyrgyzstani media support organizations: the Association of Regional TV/Radio Broadcasters (ART) and the Mass Media Association. ART is producing news and promoting advertisement and news exchange opportunities between six regional stations belonging to the association. The Mass Media Association is a media advocacy organization involved in establishing a new system for frequency distribution. Both organizations were housed at Internews and used Internews'

resources. Internews also assisted them in fundraising and strategizing to become independent self-sustaining organizations.

The Mass Media Association

In the summer 2003, Internews saw the creation of the Mass Media Association of Radio and TV Broadcasters. The idea of this new Association came out of Internews' work conference early that year, and its registration process was conducted under the guidance of Internews' lawyer Akmat Alagushev. The Mass Media Association set out to work on the media legislation, lobby for the adoption of new laws that would stimulate Kyrgyz broadcasting, making frequencies and technical means equally accessible to all broadcasters, and promote the development of the media industry in Kyrgyzstan.

The Association's 13 current members include: Osh TV (Osh), Almaz-Yug Radio (Osh), EMTV (Karakol), Syrdash TV/Radio (Cholpon-Ata), Anten-TV (Karakol), Jalalabad State TV (Jalalabad), Keremet TV/Radio (Osh), Center TV (Kadamjay), DDD Information-Creative Center (OSH), Mezon TV (Osh), Shankhai TV/Radio (Naryn), Tenir-Too Radio (Naryn), *Demokrat* Newspaper (Bishkek).

Very soon after its creation, the Mass Media Association became a strong force behind the media community's efforts to establish a fair system for frequency allocation that had been lacking in the Kyrgyz Republic for more than two years. Over 30 broadcast outlets were waiting to obtain a frequency, while the broadcasting licenses of 10 others had expired and were being extended for periods of only three months at a time. With assistance from Internews' lawyers, the Mass Media Association sent open letters to President Akayev and Prime Minister Tanaev describing the critical situation of the electronic media in the country. These letters followed a resolution of the State Agency of Communications announcing that frequencies would be attributed to private stations through an auction, while failing to explain the precise system of frequency allocation. The resolution also failed to mention an alternative document submitted by an independent Expert Group led by the Mass Media Association which outlined precise rules of competition for the attribution of radio frequencies. The document was drafted with the technical support from Internews and financial support from OSI.

In support of the Expert Group's initiative, Internews had put out its own statement on the allocation of frequencies, calling for "an equitable, transparent and based on the rational principles and rule of law order of allocation of frequencies [that] should...prevent the danger of freedom of speech limitation and state censorship of information." Internews also called the State Commission on Radio Frequencies to make sure its work is open and transparent and its structure includes representatives of civil society and media community. "Applications for obtaining broadcast licenses should be evaluated in accordance with clear, objective criteria, reflecting the needs of various layers of population, barring over-concentration of several frequencies in one hand," Internews said in its statement.

During this period, Internews used the AED support to send the president and managing director of the Mass Media Association and four managers from major stations in Bishkek – all

members of the Expert Group – to the 7th International Congress of the National Association of Television and Radio Broadcasters (NAT) in Moscow. The Congress gave them an opportunity to collect information on broadcasting policies, legislations, and technologies, and to share views with CIS media associations and their members.

As a result of all of these efforts, in October 2004 the State Commission for Radio Frequencies issued five-year broadcasting licenses to nine independent Kyrgyz electronic media outlets: TV/Radio Station Tatina, Radio Almaz, Radio Almaz-Yug, Mezon-TV, Radio Manas, Radio Tenir-Too, TV/Radio Max, AvtoRadio, and TV/Radio TOF. In addition, TV stations Azia-Center and NBT had their licenses extended for three months. Allocation of these licenses was considered a success for all electronic media outlets that were waiting for a renewal or extension.

In another significant 2004 event, the Mass Media Association held a national media conference on the Development of the Media Market in the Kyrgyz Republic. Participants included nearly 100 managers of independent and state media outlets from throughout the country, as well as representatives from media organizations and business structures related to the media market. The conference addressed issues of self-sustainability of media outlets, Internet regulation, media work during elections, and MRI advocacy, among others.

Association of Journalists

At the start of this grant period, Internews was working in close partnership with the highly effective 160-member Association of Journalists, providing office support, salaries, and logistical support to its effort to advocate for journalists' rights. At the same time, Internews was looking for sources of other funding to help the Association achieve financial independence. This became possible in the spring 2002 when the Association received funding from OSI and IFJ.

Training

During this grant period, Internews planned an ambitious schedule of seminars to raise the ethical and professional standards among journalists and managers at television and radio stations. Internews was able to leverage the USAID grant to a huge extent: holding or co-sponsoring 27 seminars, 38 residencies, numerous conferences, and assorted roundtables and workshops. Internews did this by securing funding from other organizations such as UNICEF, the OSCE, the European Commission, IOM, NED, FOJO, AED, and others.

We had proposed to conduct seminars focusing on the issues associated with station sustainability and news production, journalism quality, elections coverage, public policy and social issues. We also continued to use on-site residencies and work with other international broadcasters to broaden the perspectives of Kyrgyz professionals. Internews' training philosophy focuses on continual reinforcement of skills, both through its seminars and residencies and through co-productions on national and regional productions. Training sessions are focused on the transfer of practical, concrete skills that can help stations improve production values, increase the quantity of informational programming, introduce new

technologies, and provide marketing, management, and ad sales techniques to help stations increase and diversify their revenue base, thereby increasing their independence. Subjects of seminars during this period included journalism, editing and camerawork, computer graphics, legal and policy skills, elections coverage, management, marketing, promotion/design, gender and trafficking issues.

In one particularly significant initiative in 2003-2004, Internews conducted three sessions of the News School, lasting 10-14 days each, for a total of 47 students from journalism departments throughout Kyrgyzstan. Students worked in the condition of real newsrooms under the guidance of Internews' *Open Asia* producers and experienced professionals from Russia. In addition, Internews held a series of master classes on practical TV journalism for students in Osh and Bishkek. Also worth mentioning is that Internews' *Open Asia* producer Evgenia Tkalich taught TV journalism on a weekly basis at the Journalism Faculty of the Kyrgyz Technical University.

Internews had also held a number of trainings and seminars for regional journalists involved in the production of Internews' programs *Door*, *Asman*, and *Open Asia*. For instance, in the summer 2003 Internews conducted three seminars, seven-eight days each, on the production of news reports for *Door*. These seminars were attended by a total of over 30 journalists from 13 local TV stations and production studios. Many of these seminars resulted in the production of stories that were later broadcast during the actual programs.

Significantly, the majority of Internews' seminars and residencies were conducted by our own trainers, specialists from Internews Russia and Internews Ukraine, and other NIS professionals. This reflects a conscious effort on Internews' part to address the need for a sustainable local training capacity. In September 2003 Central Asian Internews offices held a "Training for Trainers" seminar in Bishkek for 15 journalists and Internews employees with the purpose of developing a cadre of local trainers.

Ahead of the local October 2004 elections, Internews also engaged in a series of specialized pre-election trainings, providing assistance to three regional TV stations that were funded under the Open Unbiased Election-Related Initiatives Support Program, financed by USAID in Kyrgyzstan and administered by Counterpart. These three TV stations (Anten TV in Karakol, Osh TV and DDD in Osh) produced a series of six PSAs on elections under the slogan "Make Your Choice" as well as talk shows on election-related issues. The main message of the PSAs was "go and vote," with the aim to persuade the electorate to participate in the voting process. This project proved that it is more effective to make a series of PSAs rather than separate ones, air them in several languages, and target a carefully selected audience. For instance, a series targeting youth should be supported by a related information campaign through youth radio stations, boards in the streets, and banners on web pages.

Also during this grant period, Internews held or contributed to a number of major media conferences and events, including the following:

- Three annual award ceremonies "Stremlenie" (Aspiration), a top media competition in Kyrgyzstan.

- 2004 International Emmy Awards' semifinal round for the Asia/Africa region in the categories of "Best News Story" and "Best Documentary." Internews ran the event with support from the US Embassy in Kyrgyzstan and other sponsors and partners.
- "TVd-Motion," the first working meeting of over 20 Kyrgyz TV designers and editors from stations, advertising agencies, and production companies. The meeting was held in 2003 with support from AED/START. Four designers who presented their work had earlier participated in the Russian conference "Image of a TV Station: Branding, Promotion and Design." Their trip was made possible by Internews and AED. In 2002, Internews, together with AED, sent 12 Kyrgyz participants to a similar Russian event.
- The First National Media Conference "We Make News," held in July 2003 in Bishkek with support from Soros Foundation-Kyrgyzstan, Freedom House, and the US Embassy and with the participation of the presidential press service, Institute for War and Peace Reporting, Association of Regional Broadcasters of Kyrgyzstan, and Mass Media Association of Kyrgyzstan. Over 200 media professionals and guests attended the conference that finished with Internews' annual awards ceremony "Stremlenie."
- Twelve chief editors and journalists from 12 Kyrgyz TV stations participated in the 2003 *Mir Novostei* ("The World of News") conference in Moscow. Over 200 broadcasters and news directors from 13 of the 15 former Soviet republics gathered to discuss issues affecting their work. Kyrgyzstani participants were sponsored by Internews and AED.
- Work conference for the media held in early 2003 and attended by 50 representatives from 30 media outlets in Kyrgyzstan. Internews presented a summary of its activities, projects, and strategies, and led round-table discussions on the topics of media associations, media law advocacy, business development, and others.
- Awards ceremony in the competition "Best Videos about and for Children" held in Bishkek in late 2003 with UNICEF, Kyrgyz National Broadcasting Corporation, and Soros Foundation. Internews presented a special prize for "The best quality work" to the Mass Media Center of the Kyrgyz Russian Slavic University.

Internews' office in Osh regularly provided additional consultations and master-classes to TV media professionals, hosted Internews' seminars and presentations, helped to manage small grants projects, and coordinated Internews' relations with other organizations based in the South.

Computer and Internet Technology

Internews used non-USAID funds to implement the Global Internet Policy Initiative (GIPI), support a specialized GIPI lawyer, and continue working with the Kyrgyz government on the normative framework for the telecom industry, the Internet, and electronic media. At the end of this grant period, Internews used the official request of the Ministry of Justice to provide commentary on the government's draft law regulating the electronic media and warn against efforts to control and register all Internet-based information. The letter that Internews sent to the Ministry along with the commentary was also signed by Soros Foundation-Kyrgyzstan, CIMERA, PRAGMA Corporation, and GIPI Foundation.

In early 2003, GIPI worked with the Association of Telecom Operators and the State Agency for Communications on the draft government decree for the liberalization of the telecom market after the termination of Kyrgyztelecom's monopoly on long-distance and international services. The draft included all of GIPI's original suggestions that had been previously discussed with the Minister of Transport and Communications and the Vice-Prime Minister. GIPI had also prepared commentary on the amendments to the Law on Communications related to the IP telephony legalization and creation of favorable environment for service providers. In a different effort, the GIPI National Coordinator in the Kyrgyz Republic worked as a member of the Judicial Consultative Commission created by President Akayev in 2001 to prepare a constitutional amendment for the creation of arbitration courts that enabled arbitration in ICT and information-related disputes. It is worth mentioning that in late 2002, the Agency of Social and Marketing Research named Internews' GIPI Coordinator "Lawyer of the Year."

During this grant period, GIPI participated in a number of conferences and seminars addressing the national ICT strategy. These events were organized by the presidential administration and the first minister's cabinet with support of UNDP in Kyrgyzstan. GIPI's suggestions for the development of the electronic industry and creation of the Kyrgyz center of expertise on ICT projects were approved by the president. Internews also partnered with UNDP and the Kyrgyz government to organize the Bishkek Stakeholder Conference on Building the Information Society for the CIS region. This conference, held in September 2002, came ahead of the World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva and addressed problems of the information society in participating countries. Significantly, GIPI Kyrgyzstan served as one of the founding members of the Regional Center for Information Policy that seeks to develop ICT in all of Central Asia. GIPI was also approached by NGOs and Internet users to help establish an Association of Internet Users in Kyrgyzstan.

In early 2004, Internews launched *e-Communication*, a new version of its weekly electronic bulletin that is now sent in HTML rather than PDF format and has links to outside articles, legislative initiatives, and other relevant information. The new bulletin has more than 200 electronic subscribers, and 125 issues of its monthly print version are distributed across the country and enjoy an estimated readership of more than 500 people. In general, Internews' media portal contains 1,330 blocks of information on the activities of the organization and on the media in general. This includes the Law and Mass Media section that provides information on setting up a media outlet, licensing procedures, intellectual property rights, access to and protection of information, and various legislative acts related to the media. The site receives over 2,500 visitors each month and an average of 1,900 hits on one of its pages every day. It has 450 registered users.

Print Media

The Kyrgyz Republic has several independent newspapers and comparatively high levels of newspaper readership. However, the environment for independent print media has continued to worsen during this grant period. Until the establishment of the US-sponsored independent printing press in late 2003, the authorities used their monopoly on printing facilities to control

publication of various independent papers. Legal prosecution of print journalists, including high fines and jail sentences, became a common method of dealing with the opposition.

As a result, Internews' training program for print journalists, developed and implemented in partnership with the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ), had to face these and other related problems, such as self-censorship among the media outlets. Still, Internews and ICFJ held effective seminars on news writing and skills development, as well as workshops on newspaper management and business journalism. Some of the specific examples include:

- Visual Journalism workshops in design and layout held in Bishkek in 2004 in cooperation with Internews Kyrgyzstan and Internews Uzbekistan for a total of 25 participants. Each three-day workshop mingled lecture and discussion with practical exercises to introduce basic elements as well as advanced techniques of newspaper design. The fact that participants included page designers, who institute changes, as well as editors, who approve changes, increased the likelihood that change will occur and take root.
- Two three-day workshops in business and economic reporting in 2003 and 2004 in Bishkek, Dushanbe, and Tashkent for a total of 30 journalists. According to the trainer, Kyrgyzstan, with its comparatively more developed economy, fielded savvier participants at the workshop. The Kyrgyzstani participants further benefited from meetings with the president of Kyrgyzstan's stock exchange and the president of the country's only pension fund. Such meetings served to encourage journalists to get to know real businesspeople rather than rely on press releases and government officials as their primary sources of information.
- The "road show," a series of brief, intensive workshops for early-career journalists in regional cities across Central Asia in late 2003. In Kyrgyzstan, the ICFJ press adviser George Krinsky visited Karabalta, Karakol, and Osh-Jalalabad and conducted two-day workshops in each city for a total of 32 participants. In concert with the "road show" series, ICFJ and Internews distributed the Russian-language versions of Krinsky's handbook for Central Asian journalists, *The Fundamentals of Reporting, Writing and Editing for Independent Newspapers*. The Kyrgyz-language version of the handbook, completed in December 2003, was also distributed to broadcasters.
- A practical, hands-on seminar for 15 writers and reporters from across Kyrgyzstan on the principles and methods for writing news. The seminar took place at the journalism department of the American University in Kyrgyzstan (AUK) in cooperation with AED. During the seminar, a lawyer from Internews also presented a report on the media law situation in the country, explained how journalists should deal with the laws in order to avoid court cases, and distributed the *Media Law Manual*.

Production Fund

As in other Central Asian republics, Internews had in late 2002 launched the Small Grants Program Production Fund in Kyrgyzstan. It provided financial and technical assistance to journalists and producers from non-state media outlets seeking to create programming on issues of public significance. Over the course of four competitive rounds of the Production Fund, Internews Kyrgyzstan awarded 58 small grants of up to \$10,000 to media outlets,

production studios, and freelance journalists, while \$87,000 was awarded in equipment and \$28,500 in cash. In total, the Production Fund support helped to launch and implement 21 TV, 10 radio, and 27 print projects across the country.

All projects were selected by an independent commission of experts and focused on the coverage of the most pressing social issues. The fourth round of the Production Fund called for the production of quality programs and articles covering health issues and promoting a healthy lifestyle. From an application pool of 24 proposals, an expert commission selected 12 projects. These included a series of monthly newspaper articles, a weekly TV talk show, and a bi-monthly TV program. One of the programs produced by Osh TV won the first prize for the best journalistic work in a competition organized by Soros-Kyrgyzstan in 2004 on the International Day against Drugs. Also, a two-minute video clip produced under the project “Students for a healthy way of life” was recognized for excellence in filmmaking related to children’s health and the environment by WHO/Europe. The clip, made by the students of the Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University, was shown on the Kyrgyzstani state television KTR.

Also successful and far-reaching was a series of investigative reports on child neglect published in the newspaper *Delo №*. Publication of one of the articles compelled the Kyrgyz branch of UNICEF to address the problems of children born in prison, bringing improvement to their condition. Another article sparked a public debate and led the Ministry of Education and Culture to issue an order “On the prevention of suicide and death of children and adolescents in secondary schools.” The order prohibited schools from requiring entrance exams and collecting “entrance fees” from parents. Other articles also received broad feedback, inspiring many concerned organizations and government agencies to take action in response to the child neglect problem. Considering that *Delo №* had a circulation of 30,000 copies and was widely read across the country, it is safe to assume that its articles reached nearly a half of the republic’s population.

Another project that had a profound effect on its audience was a series of comics created and published by the newspaper *Limon*. Initially, the bi-monthly comics were supposed to address the drugs and HIV/AIDS problem among the Kyrgyzstani youth. However, they became so popular that the newspaper started using the same characters to discuss other social problems. Since *Limon* was popular among young people in Bishkek and the regions of Issyk-Kul, Osh, and Chui, and one newspaper was often shared among several people, it is easy to suppose that the project affected about 50,000 people.

More than a half of all Production Fund projects were extended after the end of their planned duration, and Internews left the awarded equipment to the grantees so that they can continue using it in producing and distributing information.

Production

Internews has continued to produce the weekly nationwide exchange program *Door* (“Millennium”), seeking to fill the vacuum of information outside of Bishkek. Ten stations in Bishkek and the regions contribute to or broadcast *Door*, which has a potential audience of around 1.3 million.

In mid-September 2003, Internews launched a new radio news exchange program *Asman* (“Sky”). The 15-minute program is produced weekly and is composed of news reports from six radio stations across the country: Tatina (Kara-Balta), Tenir Too (Naryn), Salam (Batken), Almaz Iug (Osh), Burana (Tokmok), and LW (Karakol). During its first six months, the program also included one report weekly that was sponsored by the Central Asia Mountain Program (CAMP) on a mountain-related theme. CAMP was paying the stations for this report and its broadcast, and Internews was providing the service of its producer and its radio studio. In early 2004, Internews also signed an agreement with the Kyrgyz Internet provider AziaInfo to freely broadcast *Asman* through the first Kyrgyz Internet radio station (<http://iradio.bishkek.kg>). The program is broadcast three times a week, and its archive can be downloaded online. In another change introduced in mid-2004, Internews expanded the Russian-language format of the program and launched a Kyrgyz version. It is produced twice a month with the help of two Kyrgyz-speaking journalists who have joined the project.

In the fall 2003, Internews launched a 30-minute weekly talk show *Zloe Pero* that gathers journalists in a studio and engages them in a conversation about their coverage of the news. In early 2004, the program’s format was extended to 40 minutes. It is broadcast by seven independent stations: Anten TV (Karakol), EMTV (Karakol), Ekho Manasa (Jalal-abad), Keremet (Osh), Osh TV (Osh), Ayan TV (Naryn), Shankhai (Naryn), Pyramida (Bishkek), and TV CH (Bishkek, cable network). The aim of the program is to generate a debate around the often criticized work of journalists, to give them an opportunity to explain their methods and positions, and to analyze developments in the media field.

The latest production started by Internews is the 30-minute bi-monthly TV program on women’s rights *Proyavlenie*. Six partner stations – NBT (Bishkek), Mezon TV (Osh), Anten TV (Karakol), Ekho Manasa (Jalalabat), Shankhai (Naryn), and Tatina (Karabalta) – contribute reports to the program and broadcast its final version. In November 2004, Internews also signed an agreement with the National Television and Radio Corporation that allows Kyrgyz State TV (KTR) to broadcast *Proyavlenie*. The program is accompanied by a series of roundtables held by the NGO Sezim in the regions of the country. These discussions bring together representatives of the media, NGOs, and local authorities and focus on the gender issues brought up in the programs. These include domestic violence, bride robbing, migration, trafficking, and alcoholism.

In June 2004, Internews began broadcasting its programs *Door*, *Open Asia*, and *Zloe Pero* on TV CH channel of the ALA TV cable service in Bishkek. The service has more than 20,000 subscribers, reaching a potential audience of over 80,000 viewers. It is worth noting that four stations in Kyrgyzstan currently contribute stories to *Open Asia*. Its production is based in Bishkek with the producer, editor, and Kyrgyzstani anchor of the program. Each month Internews’ Osh office contributes two reports for the program.

In another significant initiative, Internews has taken a lead in the new Ferghana Valley Exchange project. In May 2004, Eurasia Foundation awarded three grants of \$110,000 to fund information exchange projects and TV programs in the Ferghana Valley. The grants, co-funded by the British Government and USAID, are part of an initiative to promote media development

and access to information in the border regions of the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The trio of grants to television stations Mulokot TV (Uzbekistan), SM-1 (Tajikistan), and Pyramida-Osh (Kyrgyz Republic) will expand the scope of an earlier cross-border media development project known as “Voices of the Ferghana Valley,” begun in 2001. The three grantee TV stations will train three additional stations and integrate them into the network producing news programming on issues vital to Ferghana Valley residents. Under the project’s framework, Internews Kyrgyzstan also signed an agreement in April 2004 with the station Osh TV to help produce a series of shows on trade and small business development. The project is implemented in partnership with the analytical and educational center Nabz in Tajikistan.

In addition to these programs and exchange projects, Internews engaged in a number of production campaigns in partnership with a diverse group of outside funders:

- With Mercy Corps, Internews shot a documentary film about a disaster preparedness program for communities in the Ferghana Valley.
- With SECO and DFID, Internews produced four eight-minute TV and radio blocks in Kyrgyz and Russian and one TV PSA about the rise of electricity prices and the problems of the energy sector in Kyrgyzstan. The radio blocks and PSA were broadcast on independent and state broadcasters throughout the country.
- With the Partnership of Professionals for Development of Kyrgyzstan (PPDK), an association of the alumni of the US-sponsored programs, Internews contributed equipment for the shooting and editing of the films about the Ferghana Valley by the journalist Alexander Kniazev.
- With the International Organization of Migration (IOM), Internews produced a documentary film *Faceless* about trafficking in women. The film was broadcast by Pyramida TV and Kyrgyz State television (KTR). In November 2004, it won the first prize in the category of Journalistic Investigation at the 7th Eurasian Teleforum organized by the Eurasian Television Academy (EATA). Internews also partnered with IOM to produce PSAs on human trafficking and organize a three-day seminar.
- With USAID/Chemonics International, Internews produced a series of six 60-minute films, three in Kyrgyz and three in Russian, on the Chemonics’ seminars about land reform. This project is an example of the use of Internews’ production skills to highlight social and economic issues addressed by other USAID contractors and grantees.

Tajikistan

During this grant period, Internews focused on providing vital information and technical assistance to Tajikistan’s broadcasters in all areas of their work. The key features of this program were:

- Training opportunities, both seminars and on-site residencies, to bolster journalistic and production skills as well as commercial management abilities;
- Legal assistance and support for both stations and journalists through consultations as well as legislative advocacy campaigns to amend restrictive media laws;

- Advocacy campaign for the VAT exemptions for the print media;
- Support for the independent association of broadcasters;
- Implementation of the computer connectivity project and creation of a non-governmental association of Internet users;
- Development of the legislation and IT strategy for Tajikistan;
- Launch of the Production Fund to support issue-oriented programming and equipment grants to independent broadcasters and print journalists;
- Support for increased electronic mail use by broadcasters;
- Production of a weekly TV exchange program;
- Launch of a youth news exchange program to link five production centers at Tajikistani universities.

Background

During this grant period, the media community in Tajikistan continued its slow recovery since 1997 when the warring sides in the civil war signed the peace agreement, and independent broadcasters and print media outlets were allowed to resume their activities. It was only in 2001 that the first independent radio in Tajikistan, Radio Tiroz (Khujand), appeared in the country. In Dushanbe, Asia Plus got its license in 2002 after an intensive advocacy campaign led by Internews. The following year, Radio Vatan and Radio FM got licenses. At the same time, it must be pointed out that media outlets not trusted by the authorities experienced significant difficulties getting on the air. Also, we can see a new phenomenon in the works in Tajikistan, exemplified by Russkoe Radio Oriyono that received its license in 2004. The radio is a part of a larger business structure that controls one of the largest banks in Tajikistan and belongs to the president's son-in-law. In other words, ownership of media outlets is quite telling as to how free and outspoken they can be.

Somewhat related to this is the challenge for all media outlets in Tajikistan to overcome regional isolation and achieve economic independence. Most media get news from the Internet, but a few can afford to keep correspondents in other areas of the country. Only state media reaches almost all parts of Tajikistan. The largest and cheapest printing house, Sharqi Ozod, also belongs to the government. In November 2003, the authorities initiated a countrywide campaign to force middle- and high-ranking civil servants to subscribe to the state newspapers and publications. The move was undoubtedly aimed at supporting the state media. State servants received letters listing publications from children's journals to parliamentary newsletters. No private media were listed.

Given these conditions, it has been difficult for small or independent media outlets to generate revenue, especially given the almost nonexistent advertising market. Therefore, stations have remained largely dependent on the local governments that cover a relatively large part of their costs in return for media coverage. In 2003, in order to win some financial breaks, several newspaper editors, backed by Internews and other concerned organizations, wrote an open letter to the President seeking more favorable tax conditions for the printed press. They saw the same system in place in Kazakhstan during a study tour organized by Internews, ICFJ and AED.

Overall, the media situation in the country improved gradually until mid-2004, when it rapidly became worse, especially for the print media. After an inspection by the tax police, the printing house Jionkhon that published newspapers *Ruzi Naw* and *Nerui Sukhan* was shut down. Then, there was a revision at the printing house Karimjon Qodiri that published several other non-state newspapers. As a result, several outspoken publications were denied access to printing houses, and some of the newspapers, such as *Odamu Olam* and *Adolat*, had to close. Newspaper *Ruzi Naw* tried to avoid this by publishing at the new independent press in Kyrgyzstan, but when the first batch arrived in Dushanbe, it was immediately confiscated by the tax inspectorate.

Needless to say, only the outspoken independent newspapers suffered from this kind of structural censorship. The owners of the publishing houses even admitted that they had stopped printing certain newspapers having received appropriate instructions from the tax inspection. It is also worth noting that the most recent issues of *Ruzi Naw* had reached a hitherto unsurpassed level of criticism of the president. Some observers suspect that the paper has ties to opposition forces based in Kulab and hostile to the current administration.

The increased level of control over the media has partly been explained by the upcoming elections in 2005 and 2006 and also coincided with an increased repression of the old warlords. Since the central power in Tajikistan is much stronger today, both economically and politically, it is plausible that political repression and curtailing of especially the print media signal an attempt by the authorities to eliminate any active opposition ahead of the elections. Perhaps, the government is trying to avoid the type of criticism that was possible during the 2003 constitutional referendum, when several newspapers published a series of articles openly hostile to the regime and some of its initiatives.

During 2004, it became evident that the authorities are further strengthening control over content. A new law adopted in February reinforced a vague obligation for all broadcasters who produce content to have a license, although they no longer require a recommendation from TajANESMI, a new media association with uncertain intentions. A new TV inspection is also supposed to check whether stations conform to the current legislation in terms of both technical standards and content. Besides opening up for yet another layer of corruption, this system also threatens freedom of speech, as electronic media outlets can be shut down by the inspection outside of court rulings. Thus, the government neither seems to be interested in establishing a fair and transparent regime to regulate the work of the broadcast and printed media in the country, nor seeks to remedy the chronic shortage of Tajik radio and video productions, this is a major factor forcing electronic media outlets to fill their broadcasting time with foreign programs.

Media Law Advocacy

As Internews Tajikistan's lawyers continued to provide legal consultations to independent broadcasters and journalists to ensure compliance with the local legislation and assist them in any legal problems that arise in their activities, Internews was also increasingly involved in lobbying the government to consider an alternative version of the Media Law.

Together with the OSCE mission in Dushanbe, Internews had in 2002 set up a working group with participation of local media organizations and legal experts to draft recommendations for legislative changes to the law. Members of the working group, headed by Internews' lawyer, presented their recommendations to the representatives of the State Committee for Television and Radio. Earlier, in December 2002, Internews together with OSCE and NANSMIT (National Association of Independent Mass Media of the Republic of Tajikistan) held an international conference to comprehensively discuss possibilities to improve the media legislation. The first such series of roundtable discussions was held as early as 2001, and it took participants six months to draft recommendations to be presented to the government. They covered four items: media registration and licensing procedures; access to information; libel and defamation; and rights and responsibilities of journalists. Despite serious attempts to create a new media law that would be more favorable to the independent media, no positive change has yet been accepted by the government. Licensing is still controlled by the state, but there still does not exist a mechanism for applying for and receiving a license.

In another major effort, Internews' lawyers had lobbied with the state authorities on behalf of three journalists from SM-1 and TRK-Asia television stations that had been forcefully conscripted into the army in Khujand in October 2002. They were arrested following a news story and a live talk show, produced during one of Internews' workshops and broadcast by SM-1, on the forced army conscription. The station had invited Khujand's head of the military services to participate in the talk show, and he came denying any allegations. The following day, he called the station threatening to draft the entire staff. Despite Internews' lobbying efforts, the three journalists had not been released from the military, but were given desk jobs as information officers to produce stories on the activities of the military. These stories were to be broadcast by SM-1.

Internews celebrated a victory in 2002 when independent radio station Asia Plus was granted a broadcasting license in Dushanbe. The station's requests for a license had been denied during the previous four years. Unlike the majority of independent media outlets operating outside Dushanbe, Asia Plus is unique in that it has a potential to cover the capital with its broadcasts. The State Committee for Television and Radio, however, had repeatedly rejected Asia Plus' applications, thereby pressing Internews and its local partners to actively lobby the government and garner support from other international media organizations, diplomats, and OSCE. As a result of these and similar efforts, President Rakhmonov instructed the Committee to issue Asia Plus a license. The station began broadcasting in September, and although it deliberately refrains from criticizing the upper echelons of power, its news coverage is still doing much to provide the inhabitants of Dushanbe with news.

Under the auspices of the Due Diligence project, Internews' lawyers made numerous trips to stations and newspapers to conduct legal audits and advise them on achieving greater compliance with the local laws. Internews had also provided media outlets with ongoing legal consultations on the media legislation, registration of broadcasting equipment, licenses, journalists' access to information, and other related issues.

Association Support

Internews has worked in close partnership with the National Association of Independent Mass Media (NANSMIT) through this grant period. Supported by Internews, NANSMIT had drafted and submitted its changes to the law on radio and TV broadcasting, wrote an open letter to the government requesting tax breaks for media, and organized a number of discussions on the most pressing issues facing the media community. In May 2004, Internews and NANSMIT held a roundtable on the possibilities of setting up a Press Council in Tajikistan. The roundtable resulted in the creation of a working group. NANSMIT has also been active in media monitoring and human rights advocacy on behalf of journalists. For this, NANSMIT secured two grants, one from USAID and one from CIMERA. Most recently, NANSMIT also secured a grant from OSCE for monitoring how the election process influences media outlets in terms of coverage.

It is also worth mentioning that a pro-government media organization TajANESMI was created in 2003. It is chaired by Muso Asozoda, the deputy chair of the Media Licensing Commission and a prominent member of the presidential Popular Democratic Party. The creation of TajANESMI could possibly be seen as an attempt by the government to exert greater control over the independent media by establishing a rival organization to NANSMIT. TajANESMI became the fourth government body with overlapping membership and mission of overseeing the broadcast media. The other three are the Committee on TV and Radio Broadcasting, the Licensing Commission, and the TV and Radio Inspectorate.

Training

Due to the substantial training conducted by Internews in news and TV production, all stations have today a much more skilled staff. Richer stations, such as SM-1 and TV Regar, as well as poorer but equally or even more enthusiastic ones, such as Mawji Ozod, TV Simo, TV Gulibodom, and TV Gulakandoz, have all benefited from about 40 technical and production seminars and 35 residencies held at the stations. Many of these training programs resulted in the production of stories that were contributed to Internews' productions and broadcast by the stations.

Thematic journalism trainings included, for instance, four seminars – two for print journalists and two for broadcasters – on covering elections. They were held in July-November 2004 in three different cities for a total of 47 journalists representing 20 newspapers and 17 TV stations, as well as university students. During the November seminar on producing election-related talk shows in Kayrakkum, participants produced four talk-show pilots. Also, in support of this election-related initiative, Internews Tajikistan, in cooperation with AED and Internews Ukraine, sent six Tajikistani TV media professionals to Ukraine for 12 days in November-December 2004 to study the Ukrainian media's coverage of the presidential elections.

The training situation is quite different with regard to radio stations. As they are relatively new, Internews and other international groups have not yet provided them with any substantial training. All of these radio stations mainly broadcast popular music. Their newscasts are short and are comprised mostly of information taken from the Internet. As of October 2004, none of the stations had any reporters on staff. The international community, mainly Internews and NDI, had through small grants funded call-in shows; NDI had also paid for a series of debates

on Asia Plus in 2003, while Internews gave a small grant to Radio Tiroz for promoting legal literacy. The latter project was a success, and the station continued its production some time after Internews' grant run out. Another successful initiative was a series of residencies held by Internews and Swedish media support organization FOJO at Radio Vatan in late 2004. Prior to these residencies, Radio Vatan had no reporters on staff, something that is now going to change. In 2004, Internews had also sent five Tajikistani radio journalists to Afghanistan to study low-budget radio broadcasting and production. The tour, organized in cooperation with AED and Internews Afghanistan, aimed at providing Tajikistani journalists with a stimulus to set up their own radio stations.

During 2003, Internews established a solid working relationship with the Faculty of Journalism at the Dushanbe State University. Several of its students regularly contributed stories to Internews' program *Nabzi Zindagi*, and one student even wrote her BA thesis about the program. This and other co-productions have had a significant impact for two reasons: since stories are produced in continuous consultations with Internews, the whole process serves to promote the skills of Internews' production staff to work as trainers as well as to raise the level of professional preparedness of beginning journalists. Overall, this has led to an improvement of the stations' productions, such as local news. Internews was also able to send three students on study tours to gain practical experience at TV stations. These students were lent cameras by Internews and, when training at the station, contributed to co-productions such as *Nabzi Zindagi* and to the local news programs.

Another study tour, supported by AED, provided the opportunity for managers from six Tajikistani TV stations to visit ATV Stavropol in Russia in August 2004. Among the topics covered during the training were personnel management, advertising, ad sales, equipment procurement, and maintenance. After the training, SM-1, whose manager had participated in the program, began broadcasting a morning news program based on an equivalent in Stavropol.

Russia had also hosted eight media professionals from Tajikistan in June 2003 at the three-day conference *Mir Novostei* ("The World of News"). The event was organized by Internews Russia and gathered 167 media professionals from all over the NIS. At the news competition held at the conference, one of the Tajikistani participants from TV Isfara won second prize in the category of human-interest stories.

Computer and Internet Technology

Internews has continued to provide Internet connection to 10 TV stations, allowing them to expand their coverage. Internews purchased and installed computers and modems at stations, furnished them with Internet access and subscriptions to news wire services, and gave staff members training on the use of computers and the Internet for research and news broadcasts. The Computer Connectivity project coordinator conducted multiple residencies consulting TV stations on working with the Internet and the News Factory software that was also provided to them. Many stations, having recognized how important Internet connectivity is for their work, have even fundraised on their own to cover their Internet expenses. At the end of this grant period, some stations, mainly situated in Khujand, had managed to get free Internet in exchange for broadcasting advertising.. For instance, TV Gulakondoz received \$7,000 from its

sponsor to cover permanent Internet connection for one year. This is the largest single investment in an already functioning independent TV station in Tajikistan to date. This project which was funded by supplementary USAID funding has achieved relative sustainability in areas that have at least some advertising market.

While providing ongoing consultation to TV stations, the Computer Connectivity project coordinator continued to work on the website for *Nabzi Zindagi*. All stations contributing to the program are now in regular contact with Internews' offices in Dushanbe and Khujand. The project enables them to send edit lists and exchange ideas and comments, making the work of both Internews and the stations much easier. Some of the stations also have some experience from working with *NewsFactory* software used to computerize newsroom operations.

Internews also continues to publish the online bulletin *Internews Media Review* (*InterMediaObzor*) that was launched in March 2003. The bulletin contains general information about media in Tajikistan, news about Internews activities, and analytical articles, which are or often reprinted in *Asia Plus* and on the site www.centrasia.ru.

GIPI

One of the main results of GIPI's work was the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between GIPI/Internews and the Ministry of Communications of the Republic of Tajikistan in January 2003. In the memorandum, signed by the Minister of Communication and GIPI Country Representative, the parties agreed to cooperate in developing legislation and an IT strategy for Tajikistan.

GIPI/Internews helped to organize "Integration of Tajikistan into the Global Information Society," Tajikistan's first national conference on ICT. The conference, held in December 2002, addressed some of Tajikistan's telecommunications issues including the following: the significant divide in access to information by various social groups, cities and villages, and women and men; lack of a sufficient telecommunications infrastructure; and a shortage of qualified experts in the ICT sphere. The conference sought to increase the active participation of private organizations, Internet providers, and government agencies; speed up the development and adoption of a national strategy on ICT development; and create reform in the tax legislation to create incentives for ICT development. The conference participants also recommended that the Ministry of Communications modernizes the telecommunications infrastructure and that the Ministry of Education develops and implements e-education. A work group was also established for monitoring and evaluating developments in the information sector in Tajikistan.

In September 2002, GIPI accompanied a Tajikistani delegation at the Bishkek Conference on the Information Society. The delegation included representatives of the presidential administration and four Internet service providers in Tajikistan. Participants at the conference pointed out that Tajikistan is the only country that does not have a national ICT development strategy. This was a significant meeting for the Tajikistani delegates in order for them to recognize the role this document plays in helping to overcome the digital divide with the support of the international community.

GIPI had started a campaign to repeal the April 2002 Ministry of Communications' decree #37 that informed the ISPs of additional charges for each minute of the use on their incoming dial-up lines. If enforced, the order would have hurt access to information in the academic community and governmental institutions, since the main Internet users through the public switch telephone network (PSTN) are universities, governmental institutions, NGOs, and private customers. The Order was the catalyst to bring most of the major ICT stakeholders, particularly the ISPs, together for the first time and unite them in a joint action. GIPI initiated an appeal signed by leaders of three associations (TANTIS, Communications Operators' Association, and TARENA), three ISPs (Babilon-T, Intercom, and KomSyTel), and the e-mail provider CADA. GIPI then lobbied with the Ministry of Communications, UNDP, the parliament, and the presidential administration. Already after one week, the decree was suspended, and the Ministry of Communication has since never taken an action in this direction again.

In 2003, GIPI assisted in establishing a non-governmental association of Internet users in Tajikistan, ISOCToj. The main goal of this Association is integration of Tajikistan into the world Internet community. GIPI lawyer assisted with the registration of this local NGO at the Ministry of Justice. The idea of ISOCToj came out of GIPI's series of practical seminars that recommended further development of the ICT sector in the country, an initiative that was supported by the Vice-Prime Minister Nigina Shropova. She had sent a formal letter to all heads of relevant state agencies, organizations, and universities recommending the promotion and development of the Internet in the republic. GIPI also played a pivotal role in the licensing of the Internet Academic Community of Tajikistan (TARENA). It was granted a license in early 2002 to operate as an independent Internet service provider for the academic community in Tajikistan. TARENA was struggling to receive this license for the previous five years and became the first non-profit Internet license holder in the country. This signified a great victory for Tajikistan since TARENA works in close partnership with the NATO Science Foundation to integrate Tajikistan's academic community into the world.

Print Media

Tajikistan's press remains the most destitute in the region, with only an estimated 15 percent of journalists able to make a livable wage. Moreover, the October 2003 incident in Khujand, where journalists investigating military corruption found themselves suddenly conscripted, reminded the fledgling independent media of the cost of bucking authority. It should be noted that most privately owned papers in Tajikistan feel free to complain about deteriorating public services in the country but avoid criticizing the government directly. Only two newspapers have crossed that line, and one, *Ruzi Naw*, had to cease publication in November 2004 when the government printing press refused to publish it.

A government effort to stifle outspoken newspapers was offset by President Rahmonov's move in the direction of giving print media certain tax exemptions. In March 2003, Internews and ICFJ, with the financial support of AED, sent six Tajikistani editors-in-chief to a media seminar in Kazakhstan, where they received management training and examined Kazakhstan's

media legislation. Following the seminar, the editors sent an open letter to President Rahmonov requesting tax exemptions for the media as is done in Kazakhstan.

The President responded to their request in March 2004, promising VAT exemptions for the print media. As a result, in the summer 2004 print media got VAT exemptions on delivery, which stand for a very limited expense for the newspapers, and although the intentions were good, in the end not much came out of the suggested tax break. Still, this stands as an achievement of Internews and ICFJ's efforts to promote print media in Tajikistan.

As for training initiatives, experienced ICFJ trainers conducted a total of two seminars and eight multiple-day workshops at the Tajikistani newspapers in 2002-2004. A good example of their work is the advanced newspaper management and financial self-reliance workshop conducted in April-May 2004 at eight selected newspapers. These two-week tailored consultations in Dushanbe and Khujand reached more than 50 newspaper professionals whose ranks included editors, journalists, bookkeepers, designers, and advertising sales agents. During the training, they had a chance to discuss newspaper business models, new revenue streams to diversify complete reliance on circulation revenue, the role and pricing of advertisement, and other topics. In general, all participating newspapers were given recommendations tailored directly to their specific needs. An ICFJ trainer had also conducted a similar management and finance training in October 2003.

Another series of ICFJ workshops addressed business and economic reporting and was conducted in 2003. Since these workshops also covered Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, the trainer had a chance to compare Tajikistani journalists to other participants. In his view, they generally exhibited lower skill level, making it necessary to introduce basic business concepts along with basic journalism. The dearth of practical knowledge also led to basic confusion about how to identify a business story as opposed to a political or social issue. At the same time, the basics of business reporting were more important for the Tajikistani journalists since Tajikistan lags in its economic development. This made training on basic journalism and mechanisms of the market economy that much more important. Helping journalists understand the country's development would also ensure that this development continues.

In late 2001, Internews received a grant from the Swiss Development Corporation to print 1,000 copies of the first Tajik-language manual for print journalists, *Tajik Stylistics for Newspapers*. Copies of the manual were distributed to universities of Dushanbe and Khujand and to newspapers around the country.

Production Fund

Content still remains the main problem for all TV stations. Most of them suffer from a limited availability of equipment and produce almost no original programming. Given these circumstances, Internews production grants have enabled Tajikistani stations, newspapers, and studios to engage in productions that would likely not exist there otherwise. Such grants have helped stations to produce talk shows on social and economic issues for large families (TV Regar) and political party issues (TV Jahonoro). These talk shows brought forward otherwise sensitive and taboo subjects for public discussion.

In one of the grants awarded in 2004, Radio Asia Plus received equipment for setting up a production studio to produce PSAs. Radio Asia Plus has so far produced PSAs for IOM, UNFPA, UNDP, and UNICEF free of charge in order to market their new production facility so that they can charge money for it in the future.

Also, a documentary film *Tresken* financed and produced through the Production Fund was broadcast on Tajik State TV (TVT) in July 2004, making it the second time in a number of years that an Internews program was broadcast on the state broadcaster. *Tresken* was later also broadcast by Kyrgyzstan State TV. The film deals with the ecological situation on the Murghob plateau and erosion caused by the increased use of *tresken*, the only plant growing on the plateau, as firewood. Another Internews' production broadcast by TVT was a talk show on the land reform. It was produced at a seminar held by Internews at one of TVT studios and broadcast three times by TVT.

Production

Following concerns about the legality of Internews' productions in Tajikistan, Internews signed an agreement with the State Committee on Radio and TV Broadcasting allowing Internews to continue producing its news exchange programs and other programs. The agreement, signed in August 2004, also allows Tajikistani broadcasters (state and non-state) to broadcast these productions free of charge or government pressure.

This agreement was necessitated by the growing tendency within the government to exert greater control over independent media, particularly Internews' partner TV stations, and requiring all programs broadcast by them to be produced by organizations/companies possessing production licenses. During that period, Internews was also approached by members of the licensing committee who insisted that Internews had to apply for a license. The licensing procedure had been created as yet another mechanism to control the content of broadcasts, further enrich the committee, and weaken the voices of independent media and production companies in Tajikistan.

Internews has continued to produce four 30-minute editions per month of *Nabzi Zindagi* in Tajik language and distribute it to 17 independent TV stations throughout the republic. Many stories broadcast in the program have helped to resolve the specific problems they addressed, inspired government agencies to take meaningful action, and brought positive change to many individuals covered in the stories.

Internews-supported co-productions have also promoted increased freedom of speech as the contributions to *Nabzi Zindagi* tend to deal with more risky subjects than do local productions. The widespread coverage and popularity of the program in many areas makes it a platform for alternative voices, i.e., those who have been unable to voice their discontent with a specific issue have increasingly turned to local TV stations and Internews offices asking them to make a story about their cases. As local governments are also obviously watching Internews, this has made them more transparent and also more accountable.

In 2003, Internews' co-productions began airing in Dushanbe, giving them a potential 100 percent viewership increase. Internews also signed an agreement with Tajik State TV (TVT) to allow Internews to produce its own programs (previously, Internews' programming had theoretically belonged to the stations, but now it has an independent legal status). *Open Asia* and *Nabzi Zindagi* have now been screened at Dom Kino with the intention to present the programs to a wider audience and attract more story contributors from Dushanbe.

Internews Tajikistan is actively participating in the Ferghana Valley News Exchange project funded by the Eurasia Foundation. In September 2003, Internews Tajikistan in Khujand hosted a meeting of the expert committee of Eurasia Foundation that was also attended by Internews Uzbekistan' Managing Director Khalida Anarbaeva and Internews Kyrgyzstan's Country Director Nicolas Ebnother. Internews provides consultation and technical support for the SM-1 station that has received the Eurasia Foundation grant to participate in the news exchange representing Tajikistan.

Internews has also formally started a partnership with IOM on an anti-trafficking campaign. In January 2004, all Internews partner stations broadcast a special edition of *Nabzi Zindagi* focused entirely on labor migration, while Radio Tiroz (Khujand) and Radio Vatan (Dushanbe) have started broadcasting jingles on trafficking. Internews has also held a series of seminars on reporting on trafficking, women's issues, and labor migration, and helped TV stations and production studios produce PSAs.

Another new production project which started in 2004 is *Javonon – Oyandai Millat (JOM, or "Youth – the Future of the Nation")*. Funded by the US State Department's Department for Rights and Labor, the project coordinates a youth news exchange program that will link five production centers located at Tajikistani universities to contribute to a weekly news program focusing on issues of importance to youth. The project is implemented in cooperation with the NGO Dom Kino and the Aga Khan Humanities Project. By mid-2004, Internews had equipped and launched three production centers – in Khujand, Kulab, and Kurghon-teppa. The Khujand center has already contributed nearly 20 stories to the program. The first program was broadcast in August 2004. With support from the OSCE, the studio in Dushanbe has regular e-mail contact with the centers in Kulab and Kurghon-teppa.

Uzbekistan

During this grant period, Internews in Uzbekistan focused on providing vital information and technical assistance to Uzbekistan's broadcasters in all areas of their work. Internews focused on:

- holding training seminars and station residencies covering television management, computer graphics, and TV journalism;
- continuing the popular countrywide news exchange program *Zamon*, which includes 20 participating stations in Uzbekistan, and stations in Osh, Kyrgyz Republic, and Shymkent, Kazakhstan;
- assisting in the creation of the association of private broadcasters;
- providing continuing legal assistance to independent broadcasters around Uzbekistan;

- launching a legal literacy TV show that features court cases to illustrate the law and the legal process in Uzbekistan;
- drafting legislation on Internet use and advocating for the liberalization of the telecommunications industry;
- assisting stations across the country to acquire and use more effectively e-mail and Internet access;
- launching a Production Fund to support independent media's production of issue-oriented programming and print stories;
- providing equipment grants to supply independent stations with digital editing and production equipment so as to raise the level of their competitiveness on the media market;
- creating a network of independent regional stations by assisting them in purchasing transmitters to gain independence from the state;
- continuing publication of a regular newsletter about broadcast media news.

Background

According to the latest Worldwide Press Freedom index released by Reporters Without Borders, Uzbekistan has the lowest ranking among the four countries of Central Asia in which Internews works. This grant period has been marred by multiple cases of media outlets forced to shut down and of journalists being imprisoned, tried by the courts, forced to leave their jobs, or pressured to censor their own work. In one such case, a beleaguered journalist Ruslan Sharipov was sentenced to a 5½-year sentence on sex-related charges. The journalist had been harassed for years because of stories he wrote critical of the police and violations of press freedom.

Internews had an unfortunate opportunity to experience first hand the kind of pressure that the media it assists faces. In October 2004, Internews' locally registered NGO, Internews Uzbekistan, was ordered to suspend its activities for six months for technical violations. This repressive action by the authorities was widely regarded as an attempt to silence the organization as well as its partner stations specifically in the run-up to Uzbekistan's parliamentary elections in December. The court's suspension of Internews Uzbekistan's activities is in effect until March 13, 2005. Though Internews Network continues to work in the country, its corporate bank account was frozen (probably at the order of the Ministry of Justice) at the end of August 2004.

It seems likely that the verdict to freeze Internews Uzbekistan's activities was a pre-determined step, particularly given politicized projects in the pre-election period – such as the subgrant from the Kazakhstani media rights organization Adil Soz to monitor freedom of speech violations. Because of the verdict, Internews Uzbekistan has been forced to interrupt its participation in OSI's Drug Demand Reduction Program (DDRP) and many other projects.

At nearly the same time, Internews Network's representative office in Uzbekistan was subjected to a "monitoring" by the Ministry of Justice. Observers of the "monitoring" process, which was the first of its kind of an international assistance organization in Uzbekistan, included USAID Democracy Specialist Richard Stoddard, USAID Regional Legal Advisor

David Harden, and US Embassy officers Julie Kim, Michael Goldman, and Tracey Newell. The exhaustive “monitoring” inquired into all of the organization’s financial documents, payments, agreements with partner stations, and equipment documentation. In September 2004, the Ministry of Justice had also investigated Internews’ Media Resource Center in Namangan. Earlier, several members of Internews’ staff were threatened against continuing to work for the organization. In July 2004, editor of Internews’ bulletin *Herald TV* received a phone call warning her to leave Internews.

Pressure and attacks against Internews, other NGOs, and media organizations followed the February 2004 government decree that required re-registration of international organizations, including USAID-sponsored projects, with the Ministry of Justice as opposed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This decree was accompanied by another one that restricted financial accounts and flows of foreign cash to local NGOs. Both of these rulings were protested by the entire international community in Tashkent and abroad, however, to no avail.

In 2004, the Uzbek authorities used the re-registration procedures for mass media to suspend licenses of several independent TV stations, such as Mulokot (Kokand), Bakhtiyor TV (Jizzak), Oynai Jakhon (Bekabad), and Orbita TV. Nurafshon TV had also lost its license after being told that its programming was “subversive.” The station director had been repeatedly approached by the authorities with regard to Nurafshon’s broadcasts of the Voice of America programs as well as Internews’ *Zamon*. Significantly, Nurafshon was originally forced off the air for nearly a year in 2003, when it was warned not to broadcast *Zamon*. Since it had re-launched in August 2003, the station had been under the strict oversight of the provincial National Security Service.

Directors of all of these suspended stations were told that “they must be aware of their own mistakes” and that they could address their problems to the broadcasters’ association NAESMI. However, NAESMI was of no help. It should be pointed out that the association had been created with Internews’ legal and logistical help, and promised to be an association of independent broadcasters giving them the means to address their problems and lobby for the protection of their interests. However, it became readily apparent that the director of NAESMI was trying to bring all independent broadcasters into a single network in advance of the parliamentary elections specifically in order to control their content ensuring non-agitational nor critical materials in the lead up to an election that did not allow any opposition parties to participate and which was deemed flawed by the OSCE.

Also related to the authorities’ effort to bring media outlets under tight control ahead of the elections, was a ban on the registration of new stations and newspapers. In mid-2004, for instance, the Department of Press and Information with the Hokimiyat of the Namangan Province refused to register an independent newspaper. Internews had learned that the Agency for Press and Information ordered local authorities not to register any new mass media outlets until after the elections.

All of these repressive actions took place after the Uzbekistani parliament passed in December 2003 a law on the Principles and Guarantees of Freedom of Information. This law proved to be just a nominal measure since neither its language nor intention had anything to do with the

freedom of information, a fact demonstrated by Internews' analysis of the law and the commentary provided by the media rights organization Article 19 at Internews' request.

At the same time, throughout this grant period, Internews continued to try to find common ground with the authorities and initiate a dialogue between them and local journalists. In one such effort in July 2002, Internews organized a three-day conference on government-media relations for TV station directors and representatives of their regional Hokimiyats (local authorities). At the end of the conference, the two sides came together to shoot a *Meet the Press* type of program in which the participants once again discussed the issues they had addressed during the conference. It was also at that very event that the participating journalists and station directors had for the first time considered an idea of forming their own professional association. At that time, they had selected Internews' Managing Director as a secretary for this newly conceived organization.

Another significant aspect of that conference was that the main concern voiced by the government representatives had to do with the level of professional training of journalists. In their opinion, it was terribly low, (often cited as a reason for why government figures withhold information from them); however this is something that Internews has tried to remedy through its training projects and productions during this grant period. Internews conducted numerous journalistic seminars and residencies, organized lectures and conferences, provided partner stations and individual journalists with legal and technical consultations, and engaged them in various co-productions precisely in order to raise their skill level. At the same time, many journalists have still found that the conditions set by the government make it very difficult for them to use their newly acquired skills and produce quality work.

Media Law Advocacy

Internews continued to provide legal consultations to Uzbekistani journalists during on-site residencies, by request at Internews' office, and at the outreach legal clinics with its lawyers traveling to the Namangan Media Resource Center. Requests for legal assistance mostly focused on the clarification of the Uzbekistani laws, government pressure in response to certain broadcasts or publications, difficulties in accessing information, issues having to do with registration, licensing and frequency allocation, and legislation related to the Internet.

To help independent stations avoid legal problems, using a grant from the Open Society Institute, Internews' specialists conducted due diligence audits to insure their compliance with all laws, regulations, as well as bookkeeping practices.

In March 2004, Internews signed a contract with the OSCE office in Tashkent to extend Internews' OSCE-funded Legal Clinic for Journalists, which pays the salaries of three lawyers who represent Uzbekistani journalists in court. Throughout this grant period, Internews' lawyers served as defense counsel in numerous court cases representing journalists, including Radio Liberty correspondents Gulasal Kamalova and Nosir Zokir, editor of the newspaper *Pop Tongi* Ortiquali Nomozov, Orbita TV journalist A. Alimkulova in Angren, newspaper *Mokhiyat* and its journalists, and many others. The OSCE project also entailed translating Uzbekistan's mass media legislation into English and submitting it for assessment to European

and US experts. Together with OSCE, Internews Uzbekistan had also held a conference in September 2002, “Freedom of the Media and Corruption,” attended by more than 100 media professionals from all over the region. The event gave Internews’ lawyers from four Central Asian offices an opportunity to exchange views and present reports on the media landscape in their respective countries.

In September 2003, Internews began publishing an information law bulletin *Erkin Soz* (“Freedom of Speech”), compiled and edited by Internews’ legal specialist and deputy director Karim Bakhriev. The project was funded by a grant from the Soros Foundation-Budapest. A well-known and respected journalist/editor, legal theorist, and former parliamentary deputy, Bakhriev had previously been invited to serve on the Institute of Strategic Research (ISR) commission responsible for drafting the laws guaranteeing freedom of access to information and advised Uzbekistani lawmakers on the Law on TV and Radio Broadcasting, Law on Advertisement, and financial regulations of the work of the media. Bakhriev had further participated in the discussions on reworking the Law on Mass Media with the Institute of Monitoring Legislation, drafted the Principles and Guarantees of Freedom of Information, and worked with USAID democracy specialists on the commentary and recommendations to the legislative changes.

Bakhriev has also published a number of analytical pieces on the Uzbekistani media as well as the book *An Essay on the Freedom of Speech*, the publication of which was funded by the Soros Foundation and IWPR in Russian, Uzbek, and English languages in 2004. The book can be found on the website of the Moscow-based Center for Journalism in Extreme Situations (www.cjes.ru). In late 2004, Bakhriev finished another book on the conditions of freedom of speech, judicial reforms, journalists’ rights, laws on the protection of the rights of journalists, and issues of redrafting legislation in Uzbekistan.

In mid-2003, Bakhriev set up a network of journalists for the press freedom monitoring project, “Protection of Democratic Principles of Freedom of Speech in the Central Asian Media.” This project was a subgrant to the local Internews from Adil Soz, the Kazakhstan-based media rights organization. In September 2003, Internews introduced the project to regional correspondents. Each of them and their media organizations began sending monthly reports about possible violations of journalists’ rights; Internews’ lawyer Bakhtiyor Shakhnazarov wrote legal commentary on each case, and Bakhriev composed summaries of the rights violations. This analysis was then posted on the project’s website, www.cafspeech.kz and is circulated in print form as well as on many websites reporting on free-speech conditions in Uzbekistan and in the region as a whole. In July 2004, Internews’ representatives participated in the Adil Soz conference on the results of the monitoring project in Central Asian countries. At that time, Internews Uzbekistan and Adil Soz signed an agreement on extending Internews Uzbekistan’s participation in the project until August 2005.

Association Support

For a long time, Uzbekistan did not have an association for independent media that could succeed in registering with the government. A previous attempt in 2000, ended up in the Uzbek government dictating to that association who should run it – choosing a candidate with a heavy

pro-government orientation, rather than the candidate elected by the independent media themselves. The initiative since then had remained on the back burner, and Internews worked with informal broadcasting and journalist groups and freedom of expression advocates, providing legal support for the registration of potential associations.

In 2002 and 2003, Internews organized several events, such as the conference on the government-media relations in July 2002, and held numerous consultations with individual stations on the idea of creating an association. Supported by Internews' specialists who had drafted the association charter and prepared its application, NAESMI under the stewardship of media magnate Firdaus Abduhalikov was finally registered at the Ministry of Justice in early 2004.

However, in September 2004 the NAESMI leadership announced that the association was suspending its joint activities with Internews because Internews had apparently not transferred transmitters that were to be given to certain TV stations over to NAESMI to distribute to stations. NAESMI used its leverage inside the government to put pressure on the stations receiving transmitters and force three of them, Mulokot-TV (Kokand), Oynai Jakhon (Bekabad), and Aloka-AK (Gulistan), to refuse Internews' transmitters. Directors of these stations had later told Internews that they had hoped to wait through this period in order to receive transmitters in "better times." The director of Aloka-AK had even suggested a covert distribution of transmitters.

Faced with the changing political sympathies within NAESMI, Internews was forced to reconsider its support for the association. NAESMI has become a means for the government to co-opt independent broadcasters by drawing them together into a network, forcing them to broadcast government-produced elections material before the December 2004 elections and, in reality, bringing them under government control in the pre-election period.

Training

Based on individual requests and a needs assessment, Internews conducted a variety of training programs focused on the economic viability of stations and newspapers and topics such as management, journalistic skills and ethics, advertising sales, and production. Internews also continued to use on-site residencies as well as partnerships with other international broadcasters through specialized internships and study tours to broaden the perspectives of Uzbekistani professionals.

Internews was able to leverage the USAID grant to hold or co-sponsor more than 30 seminars, 24 residencies, three conferences, numerous workshops, roundtables, and study tours. Internews also used the funds made available by organizations such as UNICEF, OSI, BBC, IWPR, and AED.

Internews' training philosophy focuses on continual reinforcement of skills, both through its seminars and residencies and through co-productions on national and regional levels. Internews' trainers seek to transfer practical, concrete skills that can help stations improve production values, increase the quantity of informational programming, introduce new

technologies, and provide marketing, management, and ad sales techniques to help stations increase and diversify their revenue base, thereby increasing their independence.

Particular attention during this grant period was given to beginner journalists and students. In late 2003, Internews launched a six-week TV journalism school led by a former BBC reporter Michael Delahaye. Eleven early-career journalists from eight independent TV stations received instruction in news gathering, sourcing, and production. Another extended training – a month-long seminar on basic TV journalism – was organized in mid-2004 for students of the Journalism Department of the Nukus State University. And earlier, in the fall 2001 and summer 2002, Internews partnered with UNICEF to organize two one-month youth journalism trainings for more than 50 schoolchildren in Ferghana. During the second stage of the training, student participants produced five TV and seven radio reports. Some of them were included in the *Zamon* news exchange program. Students who participated in the training had started their own press club at the UNICEF Youth Center in Ferghana.

Another important element of Internews' training program had to do with organizing study tours and seminars abroad. In April 2003, two journalists and two cameramen from Oynai Jakhoni TV (Bekabad) and Bakhtiyor Shakhboz TV (Jizzak) participated in the five-day training program on investigative journalism at the Center for Electronic Media Management at Afontovo TV (Krasnoyarsk). By the end of the seminar, they produced investigative reports that they contributed to *Zamon*. Another group of journalists – four TV reporters from Chirchik TV, Margilan TV, Osiyo TV, and Sharq TV – spent 10 days at TV-2 (Tomsk) where they worked on the daily production of live news shows. They also had an opportunity to contribute to TV-2 programming by producing their own stories. Yet another journalist – a former *Zamon* producer who was launching a legal literacy TV program *Process* – was sent to Moscow's NTV for a short internship to work at the station's high-profile investigative show *Sovershenno Sekretno*.

Computer and Internet Technology

Internet access is all but free in Uzbekistan. Local service providers ban access to certain websites, especially the ones with postings or articles critical of the government, by redirecting Internet users to other websites or by simply posting "Forbidden" or "Cannot Find the Page." Given this environment, it was important for Internews to advocate for an end to the government Internet monopoly in Uzbekistan.

In 2002, Internews' Global Internet Policy Initiative (GIPI) headed a consortium of foreign embassies, international organizations, and Internet providers in this effort to liberalize the industry, and it proved successful. Early in 2002, GIPI participated in the very first roundtable discussion for Internet providers determined to bypass the State provider, UzPak. The demand to end the government monopoly was also central to the paper "ICT Development 2002-2005" drafted by GIPI in late 2001 in cooperation with the Center for Economic Research (CER). The document, submitted to the President's Economic Council, had also highlighted the need for transparent legislation and regulations to foster ICT development, reduced tariffs on computer imports and ISP licensing, and creation of an ICT council similar to the one in Kyrgyzstan.

The unanimous advocacy campaign to end the state Internet monopoly succeeded in that the government adopted a resolution “On the Decentralization of Access to International Computer Networks.” It revoked a 1999 resolution that required all Internet providers to access international traffic exclusively through a centralized national server. At the adoption of the restrictive 1999 resolution, international organizations and embassies protested, and Uzbekistan was named an "enemy of the Internet" by Reporters Without Borders.

The GIPI coordinator, besides his effort to liberalize the Internet industry in Uzbekistan, was also able to convince government officials to adopt a decree in November 2001 that gave a 500-2,000 percent reduction in licensing fees and also changed the license period for data network and ISP activity from one year to unlimited. The resolution aimed to accelerate the development of the government’s ICT strategies and create a more favorable environment for providers to compete in the Uzbekistani Internet market.

During this grant period, Internews’ GIPI coordinator had further served as a member of the parliamentary working group charged with drafting the laws on informatization, e-document circulation, e-signature, and e-commerce. During the drafting process, GIPI provided legislative commentary arguing, in the case of the e-signature law, against an EDS system based only on one technology – open and private key pairs, as provided in the original draft of the legislation. The parliament passed the laws in December 2003.

Just prior to that, in November 2003, GIPI and UNDP Digital Development Initiative Program organized a roundtable discussion on “Improving Legislation on Cyber Crimes in the Republic of Uzbekistan.” Attendees included ministers, parliament members, and representatives of the Internet community in Uzbekistan. Their discussion followed the September 2003 National Uzbekistan Summit on ICT, where GIPI and UNDP delivered a report, “The Concept of Legal Framework for Regulation of Activity Related to the Use of the Internet.” It reviewed the international practice regulating the use of the Internet and provided a set of recommendations.

Another GIPI project, undertaken in partnership with CER’s Uzbekistan Gateway Project, was to create a newsletter covering various issues relevant to ICT. GIPI was to prepare legislative and policy issues for the newsletter, while CER was responsible for technical and economic aspects. The distribution of the newsletter started in September 2003.

Internews also produced a monthly bulletin *Alternativa*. It was launched in November 2004 in partnership with the Population Services International (PSI) under the auspices of its Drug Demand Reduction Project (DDRP). The bulletin profiled the work of five DDRP partners seeking to reduce the demand for drugs and prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. *Alternativa* was being compiled by Tatiana Yakovleva, the *Herald TV* editor, who distributed it to international organizations and population groups targeted by DDRP.

Besides all of these specific initiatives, Internews continued to provide legislative and technical assistance to media outlets somehow concerned with the use of the Internet or seeking to better understand the laws regulating the telecommunications industry. Particularly important here was the work done by Internews’ Namangan Resource Center. It provided assistance, Internet access, and trainings on computer literacy and Internet legislation to employees of local

newspapers, students, and NGOs. The Namangan Media Resource Center is now hosted on Internews' server at <http://mrc.internews.uz>.

Internews' bulletin *Herald TV* comes out three times a month in both Russian (as *Vestnik-TV*) and in Uzbek (as *Khabarnoma-TV*). The bulletin reports on the latest regulatory, legal, and news developments concerning broadcasting in Uzbekistan and has nearly 500 subscribers.

Print Media

Although censorship was officially abolished in Uzbekistan in May 2002, the privately owned press continues to be stung by official interference. Since any attempts at serious coverage of political and social issues provoke a severe reaction from the officials, the privately owned press largely limits itself to the entertainment business. The development of print journalism is further complicated by a very poor advertising market, the rising costs of publishing, official as well as internal censorship, and a lack of expertise and training among journalists. The economic climate has encouraged semi-independent and particularly indigenous-language papers to seek subsidies from the government, which interferes with their independence. Just in the first quarter of 2003, for instance, four journalists were arrested, one newspaper was shut down, another newspaper was suspended indefinitely, and one of the most visible private Russian language papers, *Vremya i My* in Tashkent, called it quits.

To work with local newspapers and implement the print media component in the four Central Asian countries, Internews had partnered with ICFJ. Since the launch of their joint program in early 2002, Internews/ICFJ conducted 10 workshops and one seminar in basic journalistic skills, newspaper design, business and economic reporting, and media management. The one seminar – ICFJ's very first training – was taught by the Visiting Fullbright Lecturer Eric Freedman for 12 freelance correspondents, including *Zamon* and *Open Asia* contributors, interested in writing for www.eurasianet.org. As a part of the workshop, Internews held mini-press conferences for the participants to discuss particular topics of interest with the experts from various organizations such as UNESCO, Human Rights Watch, and International Crisis Group.

In early 2004, Internews/ICFJ conducted a series of three two-day practical workshops held in Namangan, Samarkand, and Tashkent for early-career journalists from the privately owned print media. These seminars gave the trainers a good understanding of the state of the Uzbekistani press, especially since they were a part of the "road show" series of trainings that covered all four Central Asian countries, thereby allowing for a comparison. It became increasingly evident that Uzbekistan's journalists face challenges more serious than those confronting their colleagues in the other three countries.

The "road show" series was designed to share information-based journalism skills with reporters who had mostly followed a post-Soviet style of opinionated journalism. It seemed that the Uzbekistani participants had never before considered the importance of credibility for a serious newspaper, or the concept of public trust as a result of truthful reporting. At each of the seminars, participants received a better grasp of the concepts and techniques employed by journalists in democratic and free-market press systems. While they may not have an

opportunity to put these principles into practice just yet, it was important to acquaint them with the values of fact-based, responsible journalism.

Production Fund

Given the information vacuum that dominates many regions of Uzbekistan, it is particularly important for Internews to engage partner stations in the type of projects that allow them to produce meaningful content for their audiences. One way to do that has been through Internews' Production Fund that allows journalists to receive – on a competitive basis – grants and equipment to produce radio and TV programs, publish articles, and shoot documentaries addressing issues important to their audiences.

For instance, Radio Grande did a radio project “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” The main goal of the project was to increase listeners' awareness of their legal rights. To accomplish this, journalists created a series of 48 broadcasts that aired twice a week in both Russian and Uzbek. Each report focused on one article of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights and included an interview with a legal expert discussing the actual cases of human rights violations in Uzbekistan. This among other Production Fund grants that were disbursed during the grant period created pioneering work, reporting on “taboo” topics previously unreported in the Uzbek media, including HIV/AIDS, trafficking, children's rights, and others.

Overall, the Production Fund and Internews' equipment grants that equipped stations with editing suits, digital cameras, lights, and microphones enabled independent journalists to create and launch six radio projects, six TV productions, and one independent studio production. It must be pointed out that technological support that Internews was able to provide to independent stations made a great impact particularly in the context of Uzbekistan, where the majority of stations still use VHS systems for their productions. Thanks to the USAID grant, supported by the funds from the UK Embassy, OSI, Eurasia Foundation, and others, Internews was able to replace many of these outdated VHS systems with modern digital equipment. This, in turn, allowed independent regional stations to modernize their look, better design their programs, edit them using high-quality professional technologies, archive materials, and generally compete on an equal footing – or at least close to it – with the state-funded stations, including the national network.

During this grant period, Internews had also tried to create a network of independent stations equipped with their own transmitters and therefore less dependent on the government, which leases transmitters to many of Internews' partner stations. Internews' lawyers and technical specialists had negotiated a purchase of these transmitters and their delivery from the Novosibirsk-based company Astronika. Among the stations that were to receive this equipment were Orbita TRC (Angren), Oynai Jakhon TV (Bekabad), and Aloka-AK TV (Gulistan). Due to interference from government forces, stations have gone through tremendous difficulty to receive their transmitters – at this writing, only two of them are able to use them for their broadcasts.

Creating a network of stations meant meeting with them on a regular basis to discuss the program exchange, elaborate a single news program for airing, fill the broadcasting schedules, define air timing and price listings for advertisement, and set the ground for Internews' assistance in purchasing programs and dubbing them into Russian and Uzbek. In 2003 and 2004, Internews' Technical Specialist Rinat Shamsutdinov held numerous meetings with the stations to discuss issues and technical problems related to network building. He also provided consultations to the station directors on applying for a license to change transmitters and prepare the premises for the installation of new transmitters.

Shamsutdinov also met with the representatives of the Uzbekistan Agency for Communication and Informatization to talk about licenses and permissions for the stations to import and install new transmitters. Network specialists and Internews' management had to write official letters to the Center for Electromagnetic Compatibility as well as the State Committee for Radio Frequencies – only upon receiving an approval from these two organizations could the Agency for Communication and Information issue a license for the network's frequencies as well as an approval for the import of transmitters.

Meanwhile, Internews' Marketing Consultant Vsevolod Paevsky worked to secure advertising contracts for the stations participating in the network. Advertisers had expressed interest in placing ads if the network was able to offer unified, high-quality programming; synchronization of broadcasting and commercial schedules; data from independent researchers on viewership of the whole network and each particular station; an appropriate mechanism of monitoring; and one collective bank account. As a result of negotiations, Paevsky secured advertising contracts for Mulokot TV (Kokand), Margilan TV (Margilan), and Orbita TRC (Angren). He also conducted an audience survey to help guide programming decisions for the Network.

Production

Internews has continued to produce *Zamon* ("Time"), a news exchange program broadcast by 20 stations in Uzbek and Russian. Stations in bordering cities Shymkent and Osh also broadcast the program.

In 2003, *Zamon* had restructured its format to involve and train key journalists, mostly freelancers, to bring them to a much higher quality of research, script writing, shooting, and editing. The show now focuses on beat reporting and in-depth longer-format pieces. It had also moved into a new studio and engaged a top US television design company, TV By Design, in redesigning the look and feel of the show. TV By Design worked with Internews on a *pro bono* basis.

The latest editions of *Zamon* with pictures and video files can be found online at www.zamon.uz. The page was originally developed in 2002 thanks for an OSI grant.

During this grant period, Internews had also launched a new project *Jarrayon*, also known as the Uzbekistan Legal Literacy Program. The show, which aims to raise legal literacy among Uzbekistani citizens, features actual court cases and proceedings to illustrate the law and the

legal process in Uzbekistan. Experienced lawyers, prosecutors, and court officers then revisit the case and its verdict during a talk-show discussion in which audience participants can give opinions and raise questions. As of the second quarter of 2004, six months after its launch, *Jarrayon* was broadcast by 13 independent TV stations all across Uzbekistan. Yoshlar Youth TV and Radio Channel, a state channel that covers most of the country, had also requested to air *Jarrayon*. However, by the end of the year, because of the Ministry of Justice pressure, Internews was asked to cease all of its production activity.

In 2004, the four Internews offices in Central Asia re-started the Ferghana Valley Exchange Program. Eurasia Foundation had awarded three grants – including one to Mulokot TV – to further develop information exchange projects and TV programs in the Ferghana Valley. The grants, co-funded by the British Government and USAID, were a part of an initiative to promote media development and access to information in the border regions of the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Internews' offices in each of the countries provide consultation and technical support for mass media involved in the news exchange.

Conclusion

Over the past nine years, the partnership between USAID and Internews for media development has had a significant impact in a very difficult environment. Despite recent political backsliding in Central Asia, media is better equipped than before to face challenges and produce quality information, create sustainable businesses, and lobby for their rights. Support has led to direct improvement for media on local, national, and regional levels.

At the same time, there is still much to be done to make sure that these accomplishments are sustained. During this grant period, Internews encountered numerous difficulties that have to be considered alongside its successes in order to better understand the local media environment in the four countries of Central Asia, better prepare to face these and similar challenges in the future, and better address the need to significantly step up the production and dissemination of fair, accurate, and balanced news and information about the region and for citizens of the region to help them participate in civil society and governance and make decisions about their lives.

Some of these challenges came as a result of the overall economic hardship in the region as well as the tendencies towards state monopolization that leave little or no space for small private enterprises and media businesses. There is very little investment in private stations, and their owners can hardly pay staff salaries. Furthermore, even where the media can be private and accomplished at the same time, as in the case of Kazakhstan, successful private owners of media holdings end up being relatives or close associates of the president and his allies. Providing small Kazakhstani stations with the tools to compete with larger national networks and getting these stations to resist being bought out by overpowering monopolies became a significant challenge for Internews.

Due to difficult economic situations and the slow development of a prosperous market economy, media outlets encounter tremendous difficulties on the path towards self-sustainability. Internews has addressed this problem through management trainings and production grants, but many outlets are still highly dependent on assistance from the state and sometimes lack motivation to work as real commercial entities. While offering wide assistance to all interested media outlets, as in Kyrgyzstan, Internews often encountered double standards and complacency in the work of some of the stations that participated in trainings and production exchanges. It became clear with time that these stations were not interested in making changes and that Internews' support would have been better targeted elsewhere.

Internews always tried to adapt quickly to these and other developments in the local media landscape. For instance, when it became clear that some independent TV stations in Bishkek became pro-government, Internews reoriented its support towards program content as well as towards regional stations. After all, media ownership in Central Asia is not simply a business matter. It is also a political matter because access to information gives its owners the power to manipulate it. Recognizing this, Internews tried to stay clear of situations when its assistance could have benefited media outlets that were simply following somebody's orders. Even so, it experienced a major disappointment when the media association it had helped to create in Uzbekistan turned into a political tool in the hands of the government, undermining Internews'

efforts to build a true professional network of private stations in the country and to use the collective power of independent media owners to advocate for their own interests.

Because of indirect political pressures on media outlets, Internews also had to deal with the problem of self-censorship, especially regarding the coverage of sensitive issues such as activities of the local and national authorities. When threatened with sanctions or lawsuits, many outlets and individual journalists choose to censor themselves in spite of Internews' legal advice and readiness to provide the necessary support in cases of trouble. At the same time, given the general authoritarian tendencies on the part of Central Asian governments and the lack of transparent court systems in the four countries, it is difficult to blame these media outlets for wanting to protect themselves and their staff members.

Meanwhile, changing the mindset of the very journalists who eagerly participate in Internews' projects but still do not fully believe in their cause, remains a serious challenge that Internews has had to tackle. Many regional TV and radio stations, for instance, did not believe that it was worth their effort to produce local news. Content, therefore, was and, in many cases, remains a major problem. A limited availability of expensive professional equipment and competent staff makes the production of original productions scarce. As a result, many TV stations re-broadcast other programming, and radio stations focus on popular music. In Tajikistan, for instance, none of the radio stations had any reporters on staff, something that obviously did not contribute to producing news and promoting an informed citizenry.

Finally, Internews faced a highly restrictive regulatory environment for the work of the media, and in some cases, despite serious attempts to create a new media law, no positive change was accepted by the government. Licensing remains controlled by the state bodies, as so does access to information. Given this environment, Internews did its best to lobby the international community and initiate public advocacy campaigns to liberalize media laws and regulations.

Still, there is always room to do more. For one, newspapers in Tajikistan could use help establishing a distribution system that is independent of the government. Like TV stations, newspapers are to a large extent plagued by regional isolation, which means they have restricted access to news, and their audience, as a result, gets limited information from them. Creating alternative distribution mechanisms for newspapers and networks of stations to share programming and ad revenue has, therefore, been a major goal for Internews' projects across Central Asia.